



How to Help Your Child Become a Better Writer

Things to Do at Home

1. Build a climate of words at home. Go to different places and see things with your child, then talk about what has been seen, heard, smelled, tasted, touched. The basis of good writing is good talk, and younger children especially grow into stronger control of language when loving adults -- particularly parents -- share experiences and rich talk about those experiences.
2. Let children see you write often. You're both a model and a teacher. If children never see adults write, they gain an impression that writing occurs only at school. What you do is as important as what you say. Have children see you writing notes to friends, letters to business firms, perhaps stories to share with the children. From time to time, read aloud what you have written and ask your children their opinion of what you've said. If it's not perfect, so much the better. Making changes in what you write confirms for the child that revision is a natural part of writing - which it is. Remember that writing also happens on the computer!
3. Be as helpful as you can in helping children write. Talk through their ideas with them; help them discover what they want to say. When they ask for help with spelling, punctuation or ideas, supply that help. Your most effective role is not as a critic, but as a helper. Rejoice in effort, delight in ideas, and resist the temptation to be critical. Be as positive as possible.
4. Provide a suitable place for children to write. A quiet corner is best, the child's own place, if possible. If not, any flat surface with elbow room, a comfortable chair, and a good light will do.
5. Give the child, and encourage others to give, gifts associated with writing:
 - pens of several kinds
 - pencils of appropriate size and hardness
 - a desk lamp
 - pads of paper, stationery, envelopes -- even stamps
 - a booklet for a diary or daily journal (Make sure that the booklet is the child's private property; when children want to share, they will.)
 - a dictionary appropriate to the child's age and needs. Most dictionary use is for checking spelling, but a good dictionary contains fascinating information on word origins, synonyms, pronunciation, and more.
 - a thesaurus for older children. This will help in the search for the "right" word.
 - rubbers for correcting errors that the child wants to repair without rewriting.
6. Encourage (but do not demand) frequent writing. Be patient with reluctance to write. There will be times when a child really wants to write and other times when they do not want to. Frequency of writing is important to develop the habit of writing.
7. Praise the child's efforts at writing. Forget what happened to you in school and resist the tendency to focus on errors of spelling, punctuation, and other aspects of writing. Emphasise the child's successes. For every error the child makes, there are dozens of things he or she has done well.
8. Share letters from friends and relatives. Treat such letters as special events. Urge relatives and friends to write notes and letters to the child, no matter how brief. Writing is especially rewarding when the

child gets a response. When thank-you notes are in order, sit with the child and write your own notes at the same time. Writing ten letters (for ten gifts) is a heavy burden for the child; space the work and be supportive.

9. Encourage the child to write for information, free samples, to favourite authors and for travel brochures.
10. Be alert to occasions when the child can be involved in writing, for example, helping with grocery lists, adding notes at the end of parents' letters, sending holiday and birthday cards, taking down telephone messages, writing notes to friends, helping plan trips by writing for information, drafting notes to school for parental signature, and preparing invitations to family get-togethers.

Writing for real purposes is rewarding, and the daily activities of families present many opportunities for purposeful writing. Involving your child may take encouragement, but it will be worth your patient effort!

<http://www.channel4learning.com/sites/bookbox/writerstoolkit/home.htm>
and the info below added about it.

This website has lots of helpful hints to develop writing, including information from famous authors about their own writing. There are sections about the beginning, middle and endings of stories, as well as helpful information about characters, locations, dialogue and plot. In addition to information about stories, there are sections about illustrations and poems and some fun games to play too! Well worth a look.

