

Developing Writing and Spelling at Home

Writing is a terrific way for children to express their thoughts, creativity, and uniqueness. It is also a fundamental way in which children learn to organize ideas. And learning to write well helps children to be better readers. When engaging in writing, young children often mirror what they see around them – adults and older children writing lists, notes, text messaging. They are observing the way writing is used in our everyday lives.

Writing at home

Here are some suggestions that engage your child in the writing process:

- Have your child write instructions for taking care of the family pet. These will be useful as you plan summer vacations!
- Write a letter or thank you note to a relative. Talk through what your child wants to say before writing begins.
- Make a shopping list before going to the grocery store.
- Write an online review of a book or an item you recently purchased (www.amazon.com) or a recipe you tried (www.allrecipes.com).
- Talk about the presidential election and write a description of the kind of president you want.
- Find a picture in the newspaper and write an article to accompany it.
- Start keeping a personal diary, a household guestbook, or a baby book for a younger sibling.

Does spelling count?

Early attempts at spelling are not the random swings they sometimes appear. Children’s “invented spelling” gives us a window into what they understand about written language. A good teacher will be able to tell the difference between the misspellings that indicate normal literacy development and those that suggest a possible learning disability. If you have questions, talk to your child’s teacher or reading specialist.

Writing tip: Stay positive! Kids who are worried about spelling every word correctly will often stick to a small group of words they can spell, or may avoid writing altogether.

What should I write about?

Help your child get their thoughts together in an organized way. Especially when a child starts writing, he may need help planning out what he wants to say.

Writing tip: Get organized! Use sticky notes to help organize ideas. Put each idea or important word on a note, and lay the notes out on the table for easy rearranging. This helps with planning and organization.

Writer’s strike

If your child avoids writing, use materials and tools that support both the thinking process and the physical act of writing:

- Use wide lined paper which helps kids line up and space their letters
- Use a whiteboard, which allows them to easily erase and try again
- Use a keyboard, which also allows kids to easily edit

For more information about kids and writing, visit:

<http://www.readingrockets.org/article/c37/>

