

Helping your child to develop their writing

9 ways to make writing fun and useful!



1. Read and tell your child stories

The best writers know lots of stories. This helps them choose from a wide range of ideas to use in *their* stories. Here are some easy ways to do this:

- Read to them from their own story book.
- TELL them stories – in your home language. It could be stories that you were told when you were a child.
- TELL them stories in the car, while waiting at the doctors – anywhere.
- **Play the 60 second story telling game***
- Choose a story book and read a chapter each night.



2. Celebrate your child's writing

- When children start writing, it might be one or two words, or have spelling mistakes or be messy. This is how writing starts ! A single word is writing. By doing this, you put a value on what writing is.
- Have a space at home- the door of a cupboard, fridge, part of a wall and put up your child's writing- NO MATTER HOW simple you think it is!
- Make a simple book where you stick your child's writing to keep forever. They can look at it as they grow in their writing skills.
- If your child writes something at home, encourage them to show it to someone of their choice- may be their teacher or a grandparent.

My favourite toy is a
cheetah and I call him Spoty.
I always play with him
and he can't run fast. Spoty
is yellow with black
spots. When I pull Spoty
back he zooms forward.



3. Let your child see you write

When you're in a rush to head out the door and are scribbling down a shopping list – and your child hangs over your shoulder and asks what you're doing – take a second. Show them. Writing comes in all forms, contexts and languages. It doesn't have to be neat. Or long. Or detailed. If YOU write, your child will copy you- they see you as their example.



- Let them watch you make lists- for shopping, for remembering.
- Let them see how you write and send e-mails, texts .
- Ask them to help you write thank you notes, and compose a note for school. Then you write them.
- Write cards for birthdays, celebrations with them watching and maybe copying you!

4. Provide lots of writing tools and surfaces for writing

- Give your children pens, chalk, paint, and markers. It doesn't matter how old your child is, they will love to experiment with different ways to make marks.
- Get big pads of newsprint, a chalkboard, an empty note book, cardboard or a dry wipe board.
- Use the computer.



5. Create a writing space

- Set up a quiet corner for your child to write. This might be in their own bedroom or in a room where they can focus without interruption. As your child gets older, this will become very important because they will need to write a lot for their home work.
- If space is an issue, pack writing materials into a portable container that your child can pull out at the kitchen table. Include pens and pencils, pads of paper and envelopes, a notebook, and a spelling dictionary appropriate for your child's age.



6. Postcards

When you go on holiday take some time to send a post card- either to a friend or even back to your own address, to see if the card makes it home before you do.

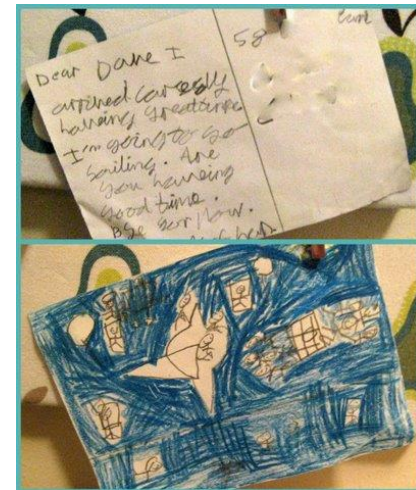
1. Chose your person. Who would your child love to write to? A friend, a grandparent, a character from TV or a story, or even themselves?

2. Get your postcard and stamp. You can make a whole trip out of going to the shop and getting a stamp. Or they might like to design their own postcard and draw it themselves.

3. Write your message. What would they like to say? Younger children might need you write for them, but still give them the opportunity to make marks and 'sign' their name. For older children who are writing by themselves, don't worry too much about correct spelling and the neatest handwriting. This is all about fun and using writing for a real purpose – enthusing them with their own ability and showing them how clever writing can be, sending a message to someone else.

4. Add the address and post your card. Do they know what an address is? Do they know how their card will be delivered to the right place? They might like to send a card to themselves so they can watch out for the postman and see the process of the card being returned to them.

5. Wait for a reply. Tip off the person that a postcard is on the way and ask if they'll write back to your child. If they've chosen to write to a character in a book, you might like to send a reply back on their behalf. This starts up a conversation and gives you lots more opportunities.



8. Make a scrap book with your child

- Use an empty note book and get your child and you to fill it with photos, drawings and diary entries – perhaps a diary of your holiday.
- Mixing up how you record things can be great for unwilling writers. One child might love to draw, but not to write so much. If you decide to do both, it may turn out that they do a lot more writing than they would do otherwise.

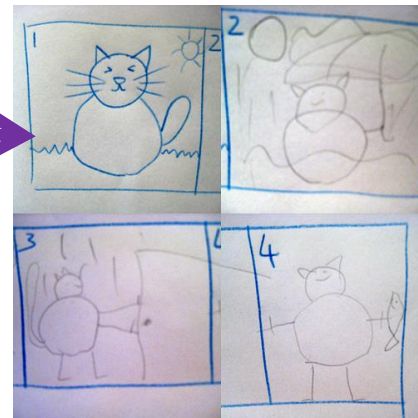


8. Make your own...

- Make your own **birthday cards** and have your child write the note inside and the address on the envelope. Then buy the stamp and post the letter together. This is a silhouette card you can make with your child's art work.



- Make your own **comic** - to share or to read to friends. As with the scrap book, using lots of pictures can be a great way to sneak in some writing too





9. Use characters from books

Your child will be reading books. They will watch the TV and see films. They will play games with a range of games online or with software. This is a useful source of writing starting points. Take any character your child likes and use the following ideas.

- **Make a fact-file** e.g. name: key facts: dates: famous for
- **Write a day in the life of...** (Like a diary).
- **Write a letter** to the character.
- **Make up a cartoon** story with the character starring in
- **Design a game** with the character in it- it's a different way of using writing.
- **Set up a pretend interview** with the character so they have to write the questions and imagine the answers the character gives.
- **Write an invitation** for the character to come for tea. What would they eat? What games would they play?



Useful websites

- I am very grateful for the information on these two websites:

<http://www.themeasuredmom.com/how-to-get-kids-to-love-writing/>

<http://kidsactivitiesblog.com/11829/writing-activities-for-kids>

I have used a lot of their ideas here.

Other helpful ones are:

<http://www.scholastic.com/teachers/story-starters/>

<http://www.kidsplayandcreate.com/50-positive-creative-writing-topics-for-kids/>

<http://www.poetry4kids.com/blog/news/twenty-fun-writing-prompts-for-children/>