

How can I help my child with writing?

Reading and writing go hand in hand. Children need to have a large number of words in their vocabulary before they can talk or write. Therefore, talk to and with your child.

- Read to your child and encourage them to join in.
- Talk about books before you read them and encourage your child to guess or predict what might happen in the story. Sometimes point to particular words or leave words out for your child to predict what they might be.
- Build up a collection of favorite books and read them often.
- Take your child to the library to select their own books.
- Write messages to your child and encourage them to write back. Talk about letters, words, and spaces, as you write. For example, “Does that word look right?” or “I better leave a space here before I write the next word.”
- Label familiar objects at home. Display the names of the members of your family for you child to use.
- Take turns writing and illustrating a story you make up together. You write a sentence and have you child draw the picture, then let your child write the next part of the story and you draw the picture. Make sure the drawings and text relate.
- Support your child’s writing attempts and praise them for their willingness to try.
- Talk about the purposes for which you write as an adult and take advantage of using writing, e.g. telephone messages, recipes, or shopping lists.
- Draw your child’s attention to a variety of writing forms such as telephone books, magazines, business letters, want ads, greeting cards, and family letters.
- Have a special place for your child to write. Make sure they have a wide variety of supplies, e.g. plain & lined papers, scrap paper, old used greeting cards, envelopes, crayons, pencils, colored pencils, bank forms, order forms from junk mail, restaurant order pads.
- Use a family message area and encourage your child to write their own messages to family members.
- Help your child listen for the sound within words. Once in a while ask, “Do you hear the sound at the beginning of that word? What letter makes that sound? Let’s write it down. What do you hear next?”
- Play with language. You can fight boredom in lines or waiting rooms by playing sound games: listen for the same beginning and ending sounds of words, creating rhyming words, or making “slow-motion language” where you stretch out the sounds in words to make them easier to hear.
- Emergent writers have a lot to think about as they attempt to get their messages down on paper. Praise their attempts!