

Top Tips for Writing at Home with Your Child

If you want to help your child to improve their writing, here are a few guidelines that you may find useful.



1. Build a climate of words at home

Go 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 talk about those experiences.

2. Let children see you write often

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 or letters to business firms, perhaps you may even want to write 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!

3. Be alert to occasions when your child can be involved in writing

Encourage your child to help with grocery lists, add notes at the end of parents' letters, take down telephone messages and write invitations to family get-togethers. Any little helps!

4. Be as helpful as you can in helping children write

If you can, talk through their ideas with them; help them discover what they want to say. Sometimes children may just need you to help them 'get going' on a piece of writing. Don't be afraid to write the first part with them and prompt them for ideas. Just simply asking, "Where does the story start?" or "What comes next?" can really help. If they ask for help

with spelling, punctuation and usage, supply that help or try to help them to find the answer for themselves. Use a dictionary together to help them to find a spelling - if you just hand the dictionary over, they may not know what to do with it. Building dictionary skills is really useful.



5. 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.

6. **Give your child, and encourage others to give, the gifts associated with writing:**

- ❖ pens of several kinds
- ❖ 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 so forth.
- ❖ a thesaurus for older children. This will help in the search for the "right" word.



7. **Encourage (but do not demand!) frequent writing**

Sometimes children aren't in the right frame of mind to write. That's ok. Come back to it at a time when they have got something exciting to write about, such as after a day out. This will stimulate their ideas more. Or perhaps if they have seen something exciting on TV, they could use this as a stimulus for creative writing.

8. **Praise your child's efforts at writing**

Try not to focus on errors of spelling, punctuation and other mechanical aspects of writing, but instead, praise their good ideas and emphasize the successes. For every error made, there are dozens of things he or she has done well. Praise their creativity or choice of interesting words.

9. **Familiarise yourself with some of the grammar terminology**

Ask your child about the grammar terms they are learning in lessons and encourage them to explain their understanding to you. Your child will have a list of KS2 grammar terms at the back of their best books which you can also look over.

10. **Share letters from friends and relatives**

Treat personal letters as special events. Urge relatives and friends to write notes, emails and letters to the child, no matter how brief. Writing is especially rewarding when the child gets a response. Your child may have a home email address (if not, they have a school email address that

they can use) and so encourage him or her to email friends and relatives. This would also be a great way to send 'thank you' notes for gifts received. Most children enjoy the opportunity to use a computer, so this will help to motivate them to write.

And the most important thing –

Have fun with writing!

