

Support Writing at Home

Young children like to scribble, make marks that look like letters, and play with writing. Chances are, your child will experiment with writing long before he or she learns to read. Here are some ways to help your child learn about and practice writing.

- **Display children's writing in a special place.** Hang your child's work on the refrigerator, a bedroom door, or a cork board; tape it to a bathroom mirror or tile. Or, scan the writing and send it to the grandparents. You will be telling your child that her writing is important and worthy of being shared. She will want to write more and more.
- **Write in front of your child and talk about it.** Whether writing a shopping list, thank you note, or e-mail; completing an application; or ordering from a catalog, explain what you are doing. Ask him what to add to the list or what to say in the thank you note or e-mail.
- **Invite your child to dictate stories.** While playing together, encourage your child to tell you a story about where the cars and trucks are going or who lives in the Lego house. Write down exactly what she says. Read it aloud afterward. Suggest that she draw some pictures to illustrate her story.
- **Create greeting cards for special occasions.** Provide paper and crayons or markers so children can make cards and then "sign" their names when finished. Show them old cards with phrases like "Happy Birthday," "I Love You," and "Season's Greetings" to copy on their cards.
- **Create an "office" for your child.** Gather different kinds of paper, envelopes, pencils and pens, crayons, stickers, and labels. Place them on a shelf near a desk or table or in a basket your child can carry to a comfortable place for writing. Add interesting and exciting items like address and date books, calendars, or an old computer keyboard.
- **Involve your child in writing while running errands.** Offer a pad and pencil and suggest your child make a "reverse shopping list"—a list of things you've already bought. At the bank, give her a blank deposit slip while you fill out yours. These tasks let children write and keep them busy as they learn new skills!
- **Put writing materials in several places around the house.** Provide pencils, crayons, or markers in coffee cans or baskets, along with a basket of small unlined pads, notebooks, or clipboards with paper. Place these collections in the bathroom, kitchen, or living room. Be sure to remind your child to write on the paper and nowhere else.
- **Take it outside!** Let your child write or draw with chalk or old paintbrushes and water on sidewalks and fences. Fill a backpack with writing tools and paper to take in the car or while doing errands.
- **Encourage all writing efforts.** Make writing an everyday part of your children's lives at home! Remember, those first scribbles are important—they are the first step in learning to write.

Source: Adapted from the Message in a Backpack for J. Strasser & L.M. Koeppel, 2008, "Supporting Writing in Preschool," *Teaching Young Children* 1 (3): 10–12.

Audience: *Family*

Age: *Early Primary, Infant/Toddler, Kindergarten, Preschool*

Topics: *Subject Areas, Literacy, Writing*