

10 Tips to help your child with writing

Tips for Kindergarten to Grade 3

1. **Read from a variety of sources.** Reading and writing are linked — success in one supports success in the other. Read stories, newspapers, advertisements, instructions, etc. to your child every day and then discuss what you have read.
2. **Encourage your child to write.** Children love to make their own birthday cards, write thank you notes, make place cards for the table, or send an email to a friend. Save old cards from birthdays and holidays to recycle for homemade cards. Whenever possible, let your child see you writing — grocery lists, instructions on the family whiteboard, emails, etc. — and get them to help.
3. **Writing can be done anywhere.** Have lots of magnetic letters or words on the fridge. Get a box of chalk and write your names on the driveway or sidewalk. Get a white board — it can be used again and again.
4. **Play writing games.** Make a game of letter finding. Show them how to form a letter and then go letter hunting in your house or in a book — count the number of "Ds" on a page. Find a picture they like and have them write words or a sentence about it.
5. **Help children build their vocabulary.** Try rhyming games starting with one word such as "mat". Say and write down all the words that rhyme, like "cat", "hat", "fat" and "splat". You'll be surprised how fast their word list grows.
6. **Explore the meaning of words.** Create a word book at home and have your child add words as they're learned. Have them note the words they use the most and talk about why.
7. **Write to each other.** Write notes to your child and leave them in interesting places, like the lunch box. Ask them to write a reply or come up with something new. If they have their own email, email each other. Have kids email jokes to family and friends.
8. **Don't limit what you write with or what you write on.** The sky's the limit — pudding, sticks or fingers in mud, earth, snow and sand, sparklers, steamed up windows and mirrors, and bubble soap markers for some sudsy learning.
9. **Writing comes in all shapes and sizes.** Point out different ways writing is used — letters, signs, advertisements, instructions – and explain why they are different. Also point out different ways letters are created – printed, cursive (written) and fancy variations. Let them be inspired to create their own letter art.
10. **Start writing at an early age.** Children often learn to write before they can read. Encourage this by showing them how to print their name or the names of friends and other family members. Buy them notebooks with lines so they can learn to make their letters correctly or a practice book with letters they can trace.

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Tips for Grades 4 to 6

1. **Read from a variety of sources.** Reading and writing are linked — success in one supports success in the other. Read stories, articles, ads, instructions, etc. to your child and then talk about what you have read.
2. **Be a writing role model.** Let your child see you writing when possible – letters, work assignments, letters to the editor, email. Help your child to understand about writing for different purposes like short stories, poems, letters, etc. Make sure they see all different types of materials such as books, magazines, newspapers, comic books and illustrated novels.
3. **Get children to write on their own.** Capturing the day's events on paper or creating a story or poem is a great way for children to develop their own writing style. Let them write about their interests – it doesn't matter what the subject is.
4. **Encourage your child to write down ideas.** A journal or diary is a simple way for kids to keep track of their thoughts or feelings. They can write about things that happened at school, on TV, news stories, pictures, sports, and activities. Journals can be purchased at the dollar store in a variety of sizes with different covers. Or for a special occasion, get one with a lock for private thoughts.
5. **Keep writing sessions short.** When your child has a writing assignment, help to schedule brief periods of writing rather than trying to write it in one go. Help create an outline before putting pen to paper.
6. **Cyberspace writing.** Encourage your children to write emails to or instant-message with family and friends. If they have their own email address, write emails to each other.
7. **Computers can be a writer's best friend.** Though we all feel that kids may spend too much time on the computer, there are some great games that help kids develop their writing skills by allowing them to create their own stories and books. Look for "parent approved" on the packaging in stores and in the library.
8. **Encourage your child to talk it out.** Writing mistakes can often be easily caught by reading stories out loud.
9. **Listen and talk to your children.** Help your child talk about what, where, when, how and why as they are preparing to write about something. If your child seems stuck, ask what the problem is and talk about it.
10. **Play games and do puzzles with your child.** Games such as *Junior Scrabble®*, word finders or crossword puzzles that involve creating and using words are a great way to develop word vocabulary. Keep a dictionary handy.