



The Role of Writing in Literacy

What role does writing play in literacy?

Reading and writing go hand in hand. While it's true that we learn to write by writing, we also learn to write by reading.

Writing is more than simply putting words down on paper. It is thinking and communicating thoughts to others.

How can I support writing at home?

You can support and encourage your child's writing. Your goal should be to make the writing process easier and as enjoyable as possible for your child. Here are some things to consider:

BE A WRITING MODEL

Demonstrate and talk to younger children about how writing is used for making lists for shopping, writing letters and cards, and making to-do lists. Ask older children to do some of the writing for you.

CREATE A CLIMATE FOR PERSONAL WRITING

Writing can be fun and inviting, especially if your child has a comfortable place to write and an assortment of tools to use. Ensure that the place your child chooses to write is quiet and has good lighting. They'll need a large, flat surface and a place to keep their writing materials.

Provide a lot of different kinds of paper, pencils, pens, erasers and pencil crayons or felts. Children can also write on a computer or other electronic device.

BE SUPPORTIVE OF YOUR CHILD'S WRITING

Show a genuine interest and ask questions about what your child draws, writes or tries to write if they are a beginner writer. Like any skill, writing improves with practice.

Share something positive with your child. Is the topic interesting? Are there some really descriptive words? Is there a good beginning? An awesome ending?

With younger children, respond to the ideas in their writing, not the misspellings or lack of punctuation. The most important parts of writing are the words, sentences and ideas. Development of the mechanics (spelling, punctuation and grammar) happens more slowly. Be patient. If you have some real concerns, contact your child's teacher.

SUPPORTING BEGINNING WRITERS

Younger children start with drawings, single words and phrases. With time, they'll advance to using sentences. Invented spelling is a very normal part of writing development.

Younger children can become frustrated when their writing skills can't keep up with their ideas. They might give up before they even get started. One way to support them is to **sometimes** let them dictate their words and sentences to you. It's important that you write what your child says and that you do not change it. Have them read it back to you when the writing is finished.

***“Language is the light
of the mind.”***

– John Stuart Mill

If you're scribing (writing) for your child, ask them to tell you where to put a period at the end of each sentence and to say "new sentence" when a new one begins. They can also tell you when a capital letter is needed. Prompt them with questions, such as "Is this the end of the sentence?" and "That is a name. Do we need a capital at the beginning?" until they're able to do this on their own.

SCHOOL ASSIGNMENTS

Don't do any writing for your child that's to be handed in at school. This includes rewriting a draft into a good copy. Children need to take responsibility for their own work. Pride of accomplishment and ownership are important parts of writing.

Ideas for Writing

ENCOURAGE YOUR CHILD TO DRAW PICTURES

Before children learn how to write, they draw pictures to share their ideas. Ask questions about their drawings, like "what is that person doing?"; "can you tell me about some of the details on the robot?"; and "can you tell me the story behind your picture?"

WRITE A FAMILY STORY

Children love to hear stories about themselves and their families. Refresh your child's memory about past events and encourage them to write about them. For fun, they could draw pictures or add photos.

WRITE ABOUT FAVOURITE THINGS

If you have a child who loves bikes or dogs, help them create a scrapbook of pictures from magazines, the Internet or the newspaper. Encourage them to write captions or a story about each picture. Have them include a title page and add their name as the author!

FIND A PEN PAL

Does your child have an aunt or uncle who lives out of the city? Did one of their friends move away? Encourage your child to write a letter about what they've been doing, how school is going or what the family has been up to. Suggest that your child ask questions that can be answered.

WRITE THANK YOU CARDS

Encourage your child to write a thank you for a gift received. Alternatively, ask your child to share some ideas with you when you sit down to write your own thank you note.

WRITE NOTES OF SUPPORT

Kids love to receive unexpected notes! Tuck one away in your child's lunch, hide one under a pillow for nighttime, tape one to the bathroom mirror or send a note through the mail. Write notes of encouragement, ask questions or share an idea. Encourage your child to write their own notes too.

KEEP A JOURNAL OR DIARY

Encourage your child to write about events or feelings on a daily basis.

DO FUNCTIONAL WRITING

Have your child help you create the weekly grocery list and invite them to write short notes on cards for special occasions, such as birthdays.

PLAY WRITING GAMES TOGETHER

Crossword puzzles, anagrams and cryptograms for children can be lots of fun and are a way to get children thinking about and working with words.

What else can I do to help?

Make writing as enjoyable and successful as you can for your child. Be aware that writing skills develop slowly and individual children develop at their own pace. If you have questions or concerns about your child's writing progress, talk to their teacher. Regardless of where your child is in their writing development, with lots of support and encouragement from home, they'll continue to grow as a writer.

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