

Schools seem to be involving young children in more writing than I remember. Should I be writing with my child at home too?

Yes, writing is an important way to help children understand that print is a form of communication and to help them learn how the writing system works. Scribbling and drawing are the starting points for learning to write. With experience and some guidance from others, children generally begin to produce more mature forms of writing and, over time, they develop better understandings of how writing can be used. You can encourage this development by:



Providing access to writing materials: Make sure that paper and pencils are available in multiple locations such as in the child's room, the kitchen, and the car.

Suggesting and supporting writing projects: Sometimes children enjoy keeping journals or writing stories and illustrating them. Some children like to write and illustrate books that can then be bound by simply sewing or stapling the edges of the pages together. Early on these projects will be quite different from the conventional forms of writing that children will ultimately produce. Think of early attempts at writing as being a bit like the babbling that babies do before they learn to speak. We encourage babies' babbling and, through our enthusiasm and guidance, help them to gradually become better at communicating.

Encouraging the use of writing for various purposes: Some children will not want to write stories or other lengthy pieces. However, they might be happy to write things on a shopping list, make signs or labels, and/or address and sign their artwork, etc.

Writing to your child and inviting answers: When writing notes to your beginning reader, use mostly words that your child can read. You can add a picture above a word your child does not yet know. Keep the notes short and leave them in interesting places for her to find (lunch box, breakfast table, mirror, refrigerator, etc.).

Note:

Once your child begins to use letters in her writing attempts, do not expect or require perfect spelling at the early stages. Let your child experiment with writing and spelling and provide spelling assistance when asked.