

Develop Writing Skills at an Early Age

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Many elementary-aged children struggle with learning to write. As a parent, there are several things you can do with your child at an early age to encourage good writing skills. By providing opportunities for writing, you will also be preparing the way for good reading skills since reading and writing are dependent upon each other.

Expose your child often to printed words throughout the day. The most obvious way of doing this is through books. Choose books with only a few words on each page and point to the words as you read them. Also, read signs and labels to your child that you encounter and explain what they mean. For example, point out stop signs as you are driving, and have your child “read” stop signs whenever he/she sees one. All of these activities let your child know that printed words have meaning.

Introduce letters and their sounds to your child at an early age. One way to do this is to write your child's name or names of family members on a piece of paper. Have your child copy the names and then read them aloud as you point out the letters in each name. Provide plastic or magnetic letters, talk about the names of the letters and the sounds they make as you help your child form words.

As your child begins to write independently, allow him/her to write words the way that they sound rather than insist that they spell them correctly. Also, don't worry about proper capitalization or punctuation at this point. Your child should learn to enjoy writing as a way of communicating. Provide note cards or stationary and encourage your child to write to family members or keep a journal. The point is not to spend a lot of time writing at one time, but rather to write often for short periods of time.

Even with early opportunities for developing writing skills, remember that it takes many years of practice for a child to become an effective writer. Be patient, and most of all, encourage your child's efforts as he/she learns this important skill.

