



Coburg West Primary School

Helping Your Child With Writing At Home

Learning to write

What we need to know

We learn to write by writing. Children love to write! In classrooms, children are encouraged to select topics that express their ideas and interests. It is difficult to write about unfamiliar topics or topics that are irrelevant to our life experiences. Before writing, talking about a topic is a good place to collect thoughts and ideas.

When children write and freely express their ideas, this is called draft writing. Children need many opportunities to express their thoughts and ideas in writing without being concerned about the mechanics of writing such as spelling, punctuation and grammar. At this stage, worrying about spelling, punctuation and grammar can hinder their styles, expressions and exploration of words that best communicate their ideas. In fact, this level of response often 'kills' off the writer who learns to write less and take fewer risks.

Instead, respond to the ideas of the writer – for example, ask: *Where did you get your idea? Are you writing a factual text (poem, recipe, chapter book etc)? What is going to happen next? Read me your lead sentence again because that really had me interested in your story. What is going to happen to your main character?*

If the draft writing is to be shared with a wider audience, and has been edited for meaning, the next stage is to proofread for spelling, punctuation and grammatical mistakes. Not all writing needs to be edited. We do not edit our shopping lists, diaries or reminder notes! Children need to be encouraged to write for enjoyment and play with words.

In classrooms, children explore writing as a process from drafts to published pieces. Children are encouraged to write for real purposes and utilise a range of different text types such as recipes, factual texts, notes, report writing, narratives and poetry. They are also taught to consider how to appeal to different audiences.

Handwriting should not be confused with writing. Handwriting is a surface feature of writing and children who are self-conscious of their handwriting benefit from opportunities to write and draw with a variety of pens, textas, paint, magic boards, chalk and 'fancy' pencils. When it comes to publishing, children often publish on the computer, use voice to text recognition or publish in a variety of ways such as a poster, alphabet books, dioramas, or chapter books. The form the publishing takes is the best match for the type of story being told.

Work that comes home from school may not have every spelling error corrected, every grammatical mistake rectified or punctuation inserted. It is important to talk with your children about the purpose of the work and what they learned, rather than emphasise the

errors. Ask ‘tell me questions’ such as: ‘*Tell me about this work ...*’ ‘*Tell me how you did this ...*’ ‘*Tell me what you liked about this activity.*’

What parents and carers can do (writing)

- Encourage children to write, write, write! Provide many opportunities such as writing the shopping list, sending letters and cards to friends and relations, writing emails, keeping a diary, publishing personal stories, labelling photos in the family album, and leaving notes. Locating writing apps such as Book Creator. Writing should be relevant and meaningful rather than writing for the sake of writing.
- Give children opportunities to read their stories aloud (while you sit back and listen). Listen with a focus on the message they express. Comment on what they have done well, for example: ‘I enjoyed how you used interesting words such as X, Y, Z.’ ‘The character you created seems so real. I can imagine how he looks.’ Leave comments about spelling, punctuation, and grammar to another time — they are important if and when it is to be published.
- Draw children’s attention to how writing is presented, for example, on brochures, billboards, books, and electronic media — these are models of writing for real purposes.
- Create a community of writers. Provide a quiet place for writing with lots of writing materials. Leave notes for each other, write poems for your children, and send messages in lunch containers. Play writing games, for example, one person writes the beginning, another the middle and the other the end of a family story. Write together.

CWPS Writing Process

Talk about...

Writer’s Notebooks – collect ideas

As an educator, I am often asked by parents how they can encourage their children to write at home. I love to provide parents with easy writing ideas and activities to keep their children writing. I firmly believe that just as reading at home helps to strengthen young reader’s skills, writing at home helps to strengthen young writer’s skills. We expect students to read every day, and we should expect them to write every day, too.

Encouraging students to write at home is no easy task. Encouraging [reluctant writers](#) to write at home is even harder. These easy to implement and screen-free writing activities will help your students and children write at home and look forward to it, too!

These ideas are perfect for:

- at home and distant learning
- summer writing practice
- enrichment or extra practice for students of all levels
- or anytime!

Below is my go-to, tried and true at home writing activities that kids love and will actually do! All you will need to implement these writing ideas at home are paper or notebooks, a pencil, and a few common household items. **Read more about each idea below and grab a FREE printout list of these activities [HERE](#).**

CREATE A WRITER'S SPACE

Children thrive with structure, if possible, create a fun space for kids to write at home. This can be a corner in their room, a desk, table, anyplace that they can go to and know it is time to write! Don't have a space to use? Grab an old shoebox and fill it with writing tools your children will need like paper, a notebook, pencils, and crayons. Now they have a portable writing desk that allows them to write anywhere!

MAKE BULLETED LIST

Have kids keep a list of all the different activities that they do each day at home in a journal or notebook. Simply put the date at the top of the list and have kids create the list. Some activities may be everyday tasks, like made my bed, while others may be more exciting like, went on a nature walk. No matter the task, have kids record them all. This simple activity not only helps kids to write each day but by creating this list, they are actually creating a brainstormed list of "seed" ideas that they can later turn into narrative writing pieces. If you have students complete this during a school break or summer vacation, be sure

they bring this notebook back to school so they can use these ideas and expand upon them.

DESCRIPTIVE WEB

Have students select any household item and create a descriptive web in their writing notebook. To do this, they simply write the word of the item they are describing in a circle and create a web of descriptive phrases about it using their five senses. You could also give more specific directions about what to write about such as a special toy, a piece of fruit, or something that fits in your hand.

FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE AROUND THE HOUSE

One writing skill that students love to practice is using figurative language. I don't know what it is, but kids love to write similes and metaphors, pack a sentence full of alliteration, and write using personification and exaggeration. Have children find an object in their home and write about it using figurative language. They can simply write a sentence with one form of figurative language or a paragraph with several.

WRITE ABOUT READING

Since students are expected to read every day, why not have them [write about what they read](#). This does not have to be a long task at all! Keep it simple and have kids write a sentence or two that summarizes their reading, something that they learned, or a prediction that they have. Just a quick response to practice writing at home each day.

DAILY JOURNAL

I love having students write in their journals each morning. While sometimes there is a basic prompt such as, write about

your favorite food or something you did over the weekend, I usually let students free-write. This is an easy activity for children to do at home, too. There is no right or wrong way to write in a journal, so just let them be creative.

Tip: If you find your child is stuck and does not know what to write about, give them three minutes to draw a picture in their journal and then have them write about their drawing.

CREATE AN INSTRUCTION MANUAL

Have children keep a procedural writing journal of all the things that they did while they were home over break. They will not only be practicing [how to writing skills](#), but they will never be stuck for an idea. They can write directions for ANY TASK they did that day including making a bed, brushing their teeth, washing dishes, building a lego set, reading a book, really anything! To motivate children to write, have them create a comic book style illustrations to match. If students complete this activity while on break from school. encourage them to bring in their writing when school begins again and “teach” their peers how to do something they are good at! Since this a writing project, it will take several days to complete.

A PICTURE IS WORTH 1000 WORDS

This one is simple! Grab any photo, even a digital one saved on a phone or tablet and have the kids write about it. They can write about what happened that day, a descriptive piece about the setting, or even a short story. Kids love using pictures to write, so why not use ones that they know a lot about already to get them writing?

JUICY WORD JOURNAL

In my classroom, we call out of the ordinary words “juicy words.” This could be a descriptive adjective, a new word that they found in a chapter book or a very scientific vocabulary word they learned during science class! Simply have kids record the word and its meaning in a journal and before long they will have a dictionary of new words that they not only love but will actually use in their own writing.

BE THE PARENT FOR THE DAY

Let the kids pretend to be the adults for the day, at least when it comes to writing. When and why do parents need to write each day? Maybe you have to write a grocery list, a recipe, or an email. Let the kids help or do all the writing that is needed that day. There is nothing better than using parent role models to encourage writing at home.

DON'T FORGET THE OTHER GENRES

Writing is so much more than a narrative or essay! Encourage your child to think about something that they love and write a [poem](#) or song lyrics about it. They can also complete writing activities with a purpose like writing a friendly letter or note to a friend or family member, or an email to a company requesting information or asking a question. Any form of writing is great writing practice!

Writing at home helps writers grow! Be sure to download these ideas for [FREE here](#) to encourage your students to write at home or to use it as an at-home writing assignment. Students will be engaged and since these activities require no screens or printables, all students can complete tasks.

What parents can do (spelling)

- Draw attention to words in the environment and in the books you read together, for example: *'Look at those two words ... they almost are identical except for the last letter'; 'That word is really long'; 'That word is French'; 'That word has three syllables in it'; 'Those two words rhyme'*.
- Play games with spelling. Play games like Scrabble, crosswords, making words from number plates, letters in your names, words that can be spelled the same forward and backwards. Look for spelling apps that you can play together, for example, Boggle.
- Play word games like thinking of rhyming words, opposites, or words that sound like their meanings. The Internet has many fun and free spelling activities.
- Point out unusual words in the books you read together.
- Look for words in the environment.
- Show that you care about spelling. Ask: *'Who knows how to spell ...'* Say that you will write it down and take a look at it to see if it looks right.
- Children learn to spell by writing and noticing words when they read. Make reading and writing an integral part of your child's day.

Best ways to support writing at home

How you can help at home: Support your child with these writing strategies.

by: [GreatSchools Staff](#) | Updated: June 30, 2022

[Print article](#)

Follow these tips to support your child's writing at home.

Provide a place for your child to write

The area should be an area that is quiet and well lit. Stock the "writing center" with supplies such as paper, pencils and crayons. You can also gather family photos and magazines in the center that can be used as story starters.

Read, read, read

The best activity to improve writing is reading. If your child reads good books, he will be a better writer. Reading exposes students to general vocabulary, word study and content-specific vocabulary. Through reading, students see a variety of authors' techniques that they can use in their own writing.

Encourage your child to keep a reflective journal

This is excellent writing practice, as well as a good outlet for venting feelings. Encourage your child to write about things that happen at home and school. This reflective journal can be used to develop the "senses" of writing. Have your child write about what he saw, heard or felt on a trip or adventure. Provide experiences in your community that will interest your child and spark her writing. Especially encourage your child to write about personal feelings — pleasures as well as

disappointments. When reading your child's journal (only if your child invites you to, of course), share your own feelings and ideas paired with positive feedback about your child's writing.

Provide authentic writing opportunities for your child

Have your child write his own thank-you notes, party invitations and letters to family. Let your child make the grocery list. Finding a pen pal for your child would make writing "real." Helping children make the connection between writing and the "real" world will increase an interest in writing.

Be a writing role model

Make sure your child sees you as a writer. Point out times that you use writing to communicate with others. Discuss authentic writing in the community such as articles and letters in the newspaper, on billboards or in written advertisements. Discuss the purpose of the writing and the target audience. When your child writes, you should write. You can schedule a day of the week that you will turn off the television and share your writing.

Start a vocabulary notebook

Teach your child new words each week and encourage her to use them. Make it into a game and give points for using the new words. Your child can keep a vocabulary notebook and get rewarded for the number of new words learned. The words will begin to appear like magic in her oral language and writing.

Ask questions

Always ask your child questions when he writes. Ask specific questions about your child's writing such as: "How did that happen?" "How did that make you feel?" "Can you tell me more about that...?" "What are some other words you could use to describe...?"

Help your child publish her writing

Share her writing with others, place it on the refrigerator or encourage her to write for kids' magazines. When your child's writing is published in a children's book, she will be on her way to becoming a lifelong writer and author. Check out these options for publishing children's work: