



TIPS FOR TEACHING *writing* TO CHILDREN

HERE ARE A FEW QUICK TIPS ON CREATING A POSITIVE WRITING ENVIRONMENT FOR YOUR LITTLE ONE.

- Keep paper everywhere. When you do, children can practice writing as well as listening, speaking, and reading while playing office, house, school, or restaurant.
- Read, read, read! Children become accustomed to seeing pictures and text together in children's books when reading is part of their daily routine.
- Children also love to imitate what their parents do. If they see you make lists or write letters, they will too. When they ask how to write a letter, demonstrate the way to form the letter and point out how you hold your pencil. It's also helpful to have them mimic your motions and to practice forming letters in the air or on the palms of their hands.
- If you write emails, don't be surprised if they ask to email a relative or friend. Using a word processor for children can make it much easier for them to communicate in writing because they don't have to worry about letter formation or to continue when they run out of space at the end of a line.

AS ADULTS, we think of writers as people who write books or create other written works. However, some adults are extremely uncomfortable when they are asked to write a paper that goes beyond functional writing. Some go out of their way to avoid jobs

that require written communication skills. These feelings often originate very early in life—possibly from the time they first began experimenting with letter writing and were told their efforts didn't mean anything.

Writing and drawing seem to be almost as much a part of natural development as walking and talking. It is important to children that teachers and parents take their work seriously. They are making meaning, and they want to demonstrate to everyone that they have discovered a new way to communicate.

"Children watch adults as they write notes, checks, and stories, and they are eager to begin writing themselves. Early writing is oftentimes labeled 'scribble writing' and is considered a legitimate form of emergent writing," said Dr. Mary Zurn, vice president of education, Primrose Schools. "The

first conscious attempts a child makes to write a letter are usually the first letter of his or her name. To an adult, the attempts may only vaguely resemble the letter, but these are moments to cherish and celebrate. What is the message they are trying to communicate?"

As a parent or teacher it's important not to stress correct or precise letter formation too soon. A focus on penmanship will send the false message that being able to "write" like an adult on the lines is more important than being able to communicate in writing. This can create feelings of inadequacy related to writing, and children may begin to view writing as "hard." Tracing letters on lined paper requires fine motor skills and coordination that are still developing. We don't want children to learn that penmanship practice is the same as writing. We want them to learn that writing is a fun way to express themselves. It is critically important to accept where children are developmentally and then gently guide their letter formation and pencil holding.

It's very easy to encourage children to communicate their stories and messages through writing. All you need is a little patience, paper, and writing utensils, and they will do the rest. 🍷



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