



PARENT EXPRESS

Connecting Reading with Writing

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Talking, listening, writing, art and reading are all connected! Learning to read is a combination of all of these factors. Each activity supports the other's development.

Children learn a great deal about the written language simply by talking and listening. Talking expands children's conversational abilities, vocabulary and confidence.

Reading and writing develop together. Children need opportunities to make connections between reading and the written word to support their overall literacy development. Writing experiences related to reading support children's motivation to read, their reading skills and their comprehension.

Why Should We Encourage Children to Write?

Writing is a way to learn to read. The key word is **MORE!** When children write they:

- remember *more* and longer,
- understand *more*,
- discuss the book *more* easily,
- ask *more* questions and
- are *more* aware.

Creating their own text based on what they've read helps children make connections and find meaning in what they read and write.

What Do We Mean by Writing?

Writing is the process of putting thoughts and ideas on paper. In this case, the focus is on motivating a child to read what is written, instead of using writing to teach handwriting or grammar. This also helps expand the child's understanding of the story. The mechanics

of writing are not as important as the child's process of thinking.

Accepting Scribbling, Spelling, Grammar and Handwriting

It is okay to accept a child's scribbling and drawing of pictures as a form of writing; both encourage a child to think about what was read. When children are able to put their ideas into print, their spelling and handwriting should be accepted as is without being corrected or judged. Remember, it's the ideas – the thinking – that's important.

Writing is a way to help children read. Children want to read what they have written. This makes reading more meaningful and improves a child's understanding. Encourage children to talk about what they have written.

Ideas for Writing

Writing becomes most meaningful when it has a purpose. The ideas below give children a purpose for writing.

- Letters
- Greeting cards
- Invitations
- Labels
- Lists
- Magic spells
- Menus
- Recipe directions
- Instructions
- Stories
- Sentences
- Advertisements
- Songs
- Poems

Relating these forms of writing to a story allows children to expand their understanding of the story. For example, after reading a story a child might make a list of characters, write a letter to one of the characters or create an advertisement to encourage others to read the story. Each of

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these activities encourages a child to recall information from the story.

Write an Acrostic Poem

Let your creative juices flow and make writing fun! For instance, if you've read a book about family, like *Tell Me a Story Mama* by Angela Johnson, your child might do an acrostic poem. Write "family" vertically down the left-hand side of the paper and then think of a word that begins with each letter and is related to family.



Create a Book

Encourage children to write their own books. Books about family. Books about pets. Books about friends. Above is an example of a shape book – a mitten to accompany the book by the same name. The book is *The Mitten* by Jan Brett.

Shared Writing

Shared writing is one way to encourage children to write and then to read. Shared writing is an activity between the reading partner and the child. For beginning readers, it is difficult to get ideas into print. They have not mastered the mechanics of writing. Trying to print becomes laborious and not much fun.

So, the child can dictate to a friend or family member! This reading partner can do the writing while the child does the thinking and talking. This works with older kids, too. Taking dictation from an older child can be a powerful motivator. Imagine how a child feels when what he or she says is so important that someone writes it down.

Sit Side-by-Side, Explain, Talk, Write

Shared writing happens when the reading partner becomes the writing partner and writes what the child says. Sit beside the child so that the child can see what is being written. Explain to the child that you are going to write exactly what the child tells you to write.

Engage the child in conversation about his or her ideas before putting them down on paper. Have the child tell you what to write and write down exactly what the child says using the child's grammar. Use clear, well-spaced, easily read print.

Encourage, Stop and Read, Read Again

Encourage the child to watch the writing take place. Stop occasionally to read aloud to the child what has been written while pointing to the words. The child might also read while pointing to the words. When finished, read aloud the finished product, again pointing to the words. Ask the child to read what he or she has written using your finger to point to the words.



Connecting Writing, Art and Reading

Connecting art with writing helps make it more fun! Some examples for the book *Gregory, the Terrible Eater* by Mitchell Sharmat, include:

- Draw a picture of the things Gregory ate when he was a terrible eater. Under the picture, the child could write a word, a sentence or several sentences about what Gregory ate.

- Draw a picture of Gregory when he felt horrible. Write below the picture how he felt.
- Make something terrible from found objects and attach a label naming the thing.
- Create a small book with drawings of favorite foods and label the pictures.



Chrysanthemum

Above is an example for the book *Chrysanthemum* by Kevin Henkes. The child has drawn a favorite flower and then dictated to the reading partner, "I like daffodils because they are my favorite flower to smell."

Sources

Miltenberger, M., Phillips, R., Harper, S., Gamble, S., McNeil, K., Cottrill, S., and Wilkins, S. (March 2011) *Reading Partner Guide*, WVU Extension Service, Program Center for 4-H Youth, Literacy Team.

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