

## Raising Readers: Tips for Parents



# Promoting Writing in Grades K-2

Adapted from: Elish-Piper L. (2009/2010). Parent involvement in reading: writing with your child at home: information and idea for parents. *Illinois Reading Council Journal*, 38(4), 53-56.

When I talk to parents and students, they often groan when the topic of writing comes up in the conversation. For example, students may complain, “I don’t like to write.” “Writing is boring.” or “Writing is hard.” Parents may report, “I don’t have any idea how to help my child with writing.” While writing may be challenging for some students, it is a key skill that they will need to develop for success in school. Furthermore, with higher expectations for writing for children in all grade levels, there is a great need for teachers and parents to work together to promote children’s writing development.

Writing is a complex set of skills and strategies that is best developed through frequent practice and real-life applications. This column offers useful background information for parents about writing development and instruction. It also offers 10 easy-to-implement ideas for parents and children to use at home that focus on beginning writers in grades K-2.



NORTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY

**Jerry L. Johns Literacy Clinic**

*College of Education*

# What Can Parents Do to Promote Writing at Home for Children in Grades K-2?

1. Provide the tools, space and time for your child to write daily. Collect a variety of writing tools such as pencils, colored pencils, gel pens, crayons and markers as well as lined paper, unlined paper, index cards, “sticky notes,” post cards and other types of paper. Place the items in a box that is within easy reach for your child. Each day ask your child to get the writing box and do a fun writing activity with you for five to 10 minutes. By doing the writing activity with your child, they will be more likely to enjoy the experience and to view writing in a positive way. Some fun activities to do with the writing box are listed below in numbers 2-5.
2. Make lists together such as shopping lists, “to-do” lists or gift wish lists.
3. Write and deliver “nice notes” to members of your family to thank them for doing something nice.
4. Write post cards, notes, greeting cards or letters to grandparents or other family members who do not live with you.
5. Write a daily journal with your child that includes pictures and words about what your child did that day.
6. Use the computer with your child so they can type words, sentences or stories and print them out. Your child can also write email messages to share with other family members.
7. Ask your child to write a story with you using the writing process. This activity will likely take more than one day depending on your child’s age and attention span.
  - a. Begin by planning what to write about (prewriting). You can do this by talking, drawing or brainstorming ideas. Write an opening sentence such as, “Once upon a time...” to help your child get started.
  - b. Hand the pencil to your child, and say, “Now you write the next part.” Be ready to help your child as needed (writing).
  - c. Read the story together. Talk with your child to find at least one thing to change in the story so that it is better. Talk about whether any words should be changed so the writing is clearer (revising).
  - d. Read the story again. Look for any corrections for spelling, grammar or punctuation (editing).
  - e. Rewrite or type the story. If your child enjoys drawing, have them add pictures to the story. Finally, share the story with others by reading it aloud, displaying it for others to see or having others read it (publishing).
8. Help your child assemble a family photo-story in a scrapbook or photo album or online on a photo sharing website such as **flickr.com**. Have your child write a title or caption for each photo. Provide opportunities for your child to share the photo-story with family members and friends.
9. Use a spiral notebook or packet of stapled paper for a dialogue journal with your child. Begin by writing a short letter to your child. Be sure to put the date, greeting (Dear...) and closing (Love,) so your child learns and practices the format for friendly letters. Have your child read your letter and ask them to write a short letter back to you. Make a routine where you exchange letters in the dialogue journal several times each week.
10. Don’t worry too much about spelling, handwriting or neatness. With beginning writers, the most important thing is to get your child excited about writing. Praise your child’s effort and encourage their creativity and interest in writing more and for longer periods of time.

**We’re here to help**

Jerry L. Johns Literacy Clinic: 3100 Sycamore Road, Suite 2003, DeKalb, IL 60115  
815-753-1416 — [literacyclinic@niu.edu](mailto:literacyclinic@niu.edu)