

## Parent Writing Tips



As the first teacher of your child, you are an important partner in our work as we help students become proficient in the lifelong craft of writing. Whether a student writes for pleasure or to procure a job, she must represent herself clearly for numerous purposes and tasks. The teachers of the Old Rochester School districts believe these tips may be helpful to you during these last weeks of summer and during the school year ahead.

### Our Writing Assessment System

The school districts of Marion, Mattapoisett and Rochester use the 6-traits writing assessment system to ensure all children advance as writers. This instruction includes a focus on the following writing standards: Ideas, Organization, Voice, Word Choice, Sentence Fluency and Conventions. These standards fit well with the new Massachusetts Curriculum Framework, for English Language Arts and Literacy incorporating the Common Core of State Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy in History and Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects. In the CCSS students are asked to apply writing process steps appropriate to their age. Literacy is shared across subject areas because students can show their thinking in any subject through their writing. Thus, primary students pre-write by drawing or talking while older students create webs, brainstorm or use mnemonic tools to organize their thoughts as they prepare for process writing which has drafts, or the genre of writing we call “on demand” which mirrors the writing you may do daily at your workplace.

### Portfolios

Just as artists keep portfolios of finished or important work in progress, a portfolio is useful for young writers and their teachers.

We have held ongoing grade level meetings to determine on our 6 traits benchmarks for the year ahead. These writing compositions align with the Common Core of State Standards. When children write on a daily basis we can observe their growth. By keeping selected writing pieces in an in-class portfolio we can observe this growth on the specific standards of the 6 Traits. Thus, not all of your child’s writing will come home. Some pieces, the benchmark writing pieces, which take place at specific dates across the year, stay in your child’s portfolio. They are transported through grades so that her growth is fostered.

You are welcome to schedule an appointment with your teacher to review your' child's growth in this craft and see her development.

### **New Ideas to Consider!**

What follows here is a Parent Guide for each of these 6 Trait standards and some suggestions for you to use at home to support your child's growth in these skills. If I can answer any questions about our value for writing or the 6 traits program, please contact me. This document is the product of teachers' Pre-K- 10 perspectives and visions for your child's writing.

I am sure you will find their ideas *write on!*

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**Ideas:** The ideas and content are the reasons for writing a paper. Every paper should convey a message and be easy to follow.

**Organization:** Organizing ones ideas helps a reader move through the piece of writing in a meaningful way.

**Voice:** Voice is what gives writing personality, flavor and style.

**Word Choice:** The specific words that one chooses to create images capture a reader's attention and make the story memorable.

**Sentence Fluency:** Fluent writing has rhythm. Sentences vary in length and structure. It is easy and pleasurable to read aloud.

**Conventions:** These include spelling, punctuation, grammar, capitalization and paragraphing. Proper use of conventions makes the story easy for others to read.

Here are the writing tips. Please find the grade level which pertains to your child and enjoy!

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## Pre-K Parent Writing Tips

- Engage your child in talking, singing, chanting, telling stories and jokes, and reciting poems and nursery rhymes.
- Read, read, and read! Talk about the pictures and stories your child sees and hears. Each time children hear and discuss a storybook; they understand something new about how stories and writing work.
- Make writing materials accessible and support all attempts by your child to write. Little broken pieces of chalk or crayon promote fingertip control and strength and encourage the correct grasp; fat pencils and crayons are too heavy for little hands. Provide vertical surfaces (an easel or paper taped to wall/fridge) to practice writing on; this supports hand skill development.
- Provide your 3 year-old with big sheets of paper and encourage loose scribbling/drawing. Show your child how to hold and move the crayon to make different strokes, back and forth, up and down, round and round.
- When your 4 year-old attempts to make letters, demonstrate how to write letters in her name. Be a good model. Write in block capital letters; they are the first letters that children can visually recognize and remember, and the first letters children can physically write.
- Help your child recognize letters and notice that print is all around us. Point out signs, logos, and letters wherever you go.
- Have your child use his own words or illustrations to describe his experiences, tell imaginative stories, or communicate information about a topic of interest. Write down his words as he watches you.
- Model, model, model! Let your child see you write often, for different purposes. Just as you read aloud to your child write aloud as well.

## Kindergarten Parent Writing Tips

- Read, read, and read! When you read a book with your child ask:
  - What was your favorite part? Why?
  - Who was your favorite character? Why?
  - What do you think will happen next? Why?
- Learning is messy! Make writing material accessible to your children. Markers, crayons, paintbrushes, chalk, and pencils are great materials to get your children writing and drawing.
- Help children notice their world around them. Talking to them is a great model of language. Let your child record what they notice using pictures, letters, words, or have them dictate their stories to you.
- Keep travel journals. This is as simple as a spiral note pad and markers. Have them draw something for each day of their vacation.
- Provide examples of writing such as grocery lists, thank you notes, invitations, etc.
- Model reading and writing.
- For more great tips, visit [www.readingrockets.org](http://www.readingrockets.org).

# Grade 1 Parent Writing Tips

- Encourage your child to tell you a story every day.
- Encourage your child to write a list for the grocery store.
- Set time every day to “unplug” technology and connect with your child.
- Have your child use temporal words when they are sharing their ideas with you.
- Encourage your child to write thank you notes to family and friends.
- Even though your child is beginning to read, continue to read to them every day. Ask your child to share their opinion about the story and give a reason for their opinion.
- Have your child compose his or her own thank you notes or holiday cards. Model heartfelt sentiments and the conventions of letter writing for your child.
- When on vacation, select post cards with your child. Help your child write a short message on each to express the highlight of their day. Show your child where to place the stamp and how to insert the card in the mailbox at the post office and enjoy sharing their experiences with friends and family.

## **Spelling:**

- Have high expectations for the spelling words we have already studied.
- Don't have your child correct the spelling of every challenging word; inventive spelling is encouraged.
- When children write and you see an error, pose the question “What do you think is the correct spelling?”

## **At Home Writing:**

- Form a pen pal relationship with your child in your home. Write short notes or reflective messages to your child and ask your child write back. These messages can be about anything: how much you love them, an enjoyable moment in the day, or they can describe something to which you are looking forward. A blank journal book, post-it, or stationery can be ways to share these notes.

## Grade 2 Parent Writing Tips

Encourage conversations with your child. Ask them to tell you stories and ask questions to gather more detail.

### **Show your child that you value writing:**

- When you read something and have a reaction, tell them why
- Talk to your child about her writing – What’s wonderful?
- Write to your child (a note in his lunch box, a letter in his room)

### **Engage in activities that enrich your child’s vocabulary:**

- Play word games
- Play a synonym game – antonym game
- Ask open-ended questions (not yes or no)
- Create a Word-of-the-Day activity

### **Encourage your child to write:**

- Have your child write her own thank you notes, bus notes, grocery lists, etc.
- Have your child write you a note for something she would like to do (i.e., have a sleep-over, make cookies, go visit a friend)

### **Encourage your child to keep a diary or daily journal:**

- Pictures, sketches, poems, comic strips, thoughts and lists are some of the things a child can include

# Grade 3 Parent Writing Tips

## Keep it Positive

- Look for what is done well, and praise – “We learn to write primarily by building on our strengths.”(Murray). Criticism makes young writers feel defensive and discouraged.

## When There is a Problem . . .

- All writers need suggestions for improvement. The power of your suggestions may lie a great deal in how you phrase them. Avoid beginning comments with “You” or “Your writing”; these phrases sound accusatory. Try using phrases like “I saw”, “I felt”, and “I noticed”. Remember to always say something positive: “I really liked how you . . .”, “It was great when you . . .”

## Be the Coach - Not the Writer

- It may be tempting to “do” the writing for your child, but it is important for you to know when to back away. You can help you child by:
  - Brainstorming topics and ideas
  - Talking through a story or informational piece
  - Providing ideas on how/where to get information
  - Being a listener-or reader-of your child’s piece of writing
  - Sharing correct spelling of words, correct use of punctuation, or other editorial tips.

## Make A Plan and Take Notes

- When planning a family vacation, activities for the day, or even the family meal, encourage your child to help you write a plan on what will needed and the necessary steps.

- When you are on vacation, driving in the car, or even making the family meal, ask your child to bullet information about what was good, bad, what was most interesting, or what should be done differently next time.

### **Allow Your Child to Type**

- Keyboarding and typing skills will be necessary as your child creates longer pieces of writing. If there is a computer available in your home, encourage your child to write and publish pieces through the use of the computer. They may also want to keep a journal on a computer. This can be a fun and engaging way for your child to initiate the writing process.

### **Write to Your Child**

- Write letters to your child and try to use a new vocabulary word! This letter could be as simple as:

Dear Charlie,

Have a wonderful and **enriching** day! I know you will learn a lot!

Love, Dad

### **Be Excited!**

- Encourage your child to read their writing out loud to you. Give them your undivided attention. Let your child know you value his/her efforts, and cannot wait to hear the next piece!



## Grade 4 Parent Writing Tips

- **Stay Positive!** Praise and encouragement can stimulate even a reluctant writer.
- **The Art of Persuasion** - Ask your child to write a letter persuading you for your permission/or for something they want. They should present their opinion and point of view. Encourage your child to list at least three reasons why they want to persuade you.
- **Dear Diary . . .** Encourage your child to write journal entries of experiences he/she had over weekends, summers, vacations, etc.
- **What Magnificent Vocabulary You Have My Dear!**
  - Promote vocabulary usage through fun activities (MadLibs, Alliteration Games “A my name is Annie, I live in **arid** Arizona and I sell **amazing** apples)
- **Tell Me More!** Ask your child to use rich vocabulary to describe their experiences or an item. Some sample questions might be: What did it look like? How did you feel? How did the item feel? What did it smell like? What were your feelings? What did it remind you of?
- **Compare and Contrast** - Make a chart comparing different options for a rainy day, dinner selections, or book selections, etc. For example: “Today we can either go to a movie or rent one, what are the pros and cons to each option?”; “For dinner we can have pizza or grill outside, what would be good about each option?”. “You have the option to start reading Diary of A Wimpy Kid series or Holes, what do you think would be good about starting a series or not?”
- **Details, Details, Details** - When writing or speaking, students should be encouraged to use a claim or topic sentence and then provide three details. Your child can do this orally or in writing. Don’t just accept: “The school day

was fun.” Continue asking “Why was it fun?” They might say something like “It was fun because we played outside, the sun was out and our teacher said it was a great day to get fresh air. It was also fun because we had a pizza for lunch and it was really cheesy! I also really liked art class today because we got to paint a big canvas, that is why today was fun!”.

- **Be A Role Model** - Share your writing with your child and allow them to see you write. Sharing your vulnerability and editing can be powerful to students. This shows children that writing is a process.
- **Read, Read, Read!** Good readers become good writers. Their vocabularies are enriched and they are able to see many different styles of writing.
- **Have Fun!** Writing is a great way to communicate with the world and words can be fun and dynamic. Share this positivity and creativity with your child.

## Grade 5 Parent Writing Tips and Strategies

- Provide your child with plenty of writing materials (paper of all kinds, pens, pencils, felt tip pens, etc.); whatever will invite your child to writing in original, colorful ways.
- Read a play that lends itself to two voices; this helps to develop fluency.
- Share some of your work-related writing with your student writer.
- Look for what is well done in your child's writing and praise this work.
- Be an eager listener of your child's writing, but encourage your child to read their writing to you.
- When your child needs suggestions for improvement, focus on your own response as a reader and begin with "I saw . . ." or, "I felt . . ."
- Assist your child in their development as a keyboarder by having them practice keyboarding skills. The following websites are helpful:  
[www.dancematyping.com](http://www.dancematyping.com), [www.abcya.com/keyboard.htm](http://www.abcya.com/keyboard.htm).  
[www.superhyperspidertyper.com](http://www.superhyperspidertyper.com)
- Use transition words and phrases in conversation with your child, especially when speaking about their writing (e.g., "First, what I'm hearing is . . .")
- Have your child send emails, thank you notes, etc. to practice typing and writing skills.
- Assist your child in trying to grammatically change their sentences in their writing from simple to more complex.
- Practice keyboarding skills; have your child type their own reports or research papers.

- Discourage the overuse of pronouns in your child's writing.
- Ask questions about your child's writing that encourage further elaboration: Who? What? When? Where? How? Why?
  
- Examples on website to see what grade 5 writing looks like
- Practice, the more they write the better they'll get
- Links for practicing typing: dancemat typing
- Assist your child in their development as a keyboarder
- Discourage overuse of pronouns; ask questions about their writing Who? What? When? Where? How?

## Grade 6 Parent Writing Tips and Strategies

- Encourage your child to share his/her writing with you or your family members at home.
- Comment with specificity. Post writing and comment on it with specifics. “I enjoyed the sensory words here.” “I loved the unique idea in your paper!” “This was so organized I could easily follow your logic.” “Your evidence was very strong.”
- Write at home regularly. Keep a journal, use a grocery list, write letters and thank you notes to special people so that you model writing for your child.
- Ask your child to read the school lunch menu, and have your child make his/her own lunch choices in writing.
- Ask your child to write his/her own notes (bus notes to the school office) before you sign them.
- Encourage your child to talk about upcoming writing assignments.
- Our big request – have your child practice writing arguments. He might argue on behalf of a new pet, a vacation, and the opportunity to watch a television show, see a movie, go on a family outing or sleepover, be granted a privilege, or express an idea.
- Plan dinner menus together and ask your child to record what is needed for the meal.
- Have your child tell his/her teachers what you do at home to encourage writing.
- Celebrate your child’s progress in this lifelong craft!

# Grade 7 Parent Writing Tips and Strategies

## Day-to-Day Strategies:

- **Light the Way** - Provide your teen with a well-stocked (e.g. access to a computer, dictionary, thesaurus, pen, pencil, paper, etc.), well-lit, quiet area for writing.
- **Practice Makes Perfect** - Allow your teen to see you write and encourage him to write for various purposes and audiences.
- **Make a Game of It** - Find ways to highlight new words and phrases that you encounter in everyday life in an interesting way.
- **Good Readers Make Good Writers** - Take your teen to the library and share your favorite authors with him. Emphasize the importance of the reading/writing connection.
- **Get Personal With Writing** - Encourage your teen to write about personal thoughts and things that interest him. Maybe even share your own writing.

## Before Starting a Writing Assignment:

- **How May I Help You?** Ask your teen how you can help. Help him to brainstorm before he writes.
- **I Don't Get It** - Ask your child to explain the assignment to you and ask him what his main point will be. If he can express his ideas verbally, the writing will be easier. If he cannot, encourage him to speak to his teacher.

## Once You Have Finished:

- **Build a Writing Super Hero** - Point out strengths in your teen's writing. It's always best to begin with a positive.
- **It's a Loooooooong Process** - Help your teen to understand that writing is a process. No one gets it right the first time . . . especially good writers. Encourage your teen to breakdown assignments into manageable chunks and to edit and revise his work.
- **Stage Worthy** - Encourage your teen to read his work aloud and to clarify any confusing areas.

## Grade 8 Parent Writing Tips

**S.T.O.P. is where we'll start.** Make your teen debate in a way that builds thinking and respectful relationships. Whether you're debating which movie to see, how to spend free time, or what to have for dinner, have them use the S.T.O.P. technique.

**S** - Suspend judgment and consider various sides.

**T** - Take a side.

**O** - Organize your strongest points.

**P** - Plan your argument and discuss.

**Writing is Evolution:** Ask some of the following questions when your teen thinks they're done with an assignment in order to help them see that a first draft is never a final draft.

- Did you answer the question that was asked?
- Where is your supporting evidence and details?
- What is each paragraph's purpose?
- Does your word choice make the meaning clear?
- Which words could be more specific?
- Is there anywhere you can connect to personal experience?
- Could you read your draft aloud to me?

### **Organization:**

- Help your teen use a daily planner to keep track of deadlines.
- Help your teen break writing assignments into manageable chunks with specific deadlines.
- Create a workspace for your teen that is free from distractions including television, telephone, music, and texting. Even a computer that is online is a distraction. Only allow the use of a computer during homework time if the homework expressly requires its use.

## Grades 9 and 10 Parent Writing Tips

- Encourage your child to read. Good readers are good writers.
- Read the text your child is writing about so that you can have a conversation about the writing assignment.
- Have your child explain what the assignment requires.
- If you see an error, don't fix it for your child. Gently point it out and encourage your child to fix it, and/or explain why there is an error.
- Encourage your child to read his or her writing aloud before handing it in to the teacher. When people read their writing aloud, they are far more likely to notice mistakes.
- Read what your child has written aloud to him or her.
- Resist the temptation to incorporate your own voice into your child's writing.
- Encourage your child to use Standard English when using social media.
- Talk about what you are reading and what you think is good writing.
- Model reading in your home. It's important that your child sees that you value reading (good readers are good writers).