

# Write Now

Every day is filled with chances for your child to write. Eating, playing, and even laughing can turn into an opportunity to pick up a pencil.

Here are 12 ways to use writing to sharpen your youngster's creativity and thinking skills—and improve his spelling, vocabulary, and handwriting.

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## 1. Family poll

Does your family prefer cats or dogs? Would everyone rather eat noodles or rice? Your child can conduct a daily poll to find out these answers and more. He'll learn to write questions, and you'll all learn more about one another. Help him come up with a question with two choices for an answer. He might write, "Do you like spring or fall better?" He can tape his question on an empty tissue box and have each person drop a slip of paper inside to vote. At the end of the day, have him count the votes and announce the results.



## 2. Picnic menu

Making a menu is a great way to work on descriptive writing. The next time you plan a picnic, let your youngster write out a special menu. Ask her to look in the refrigerator and pantry to find ingredients. Fold a sheet of paper into thirds, and help her write the names

of the foods in categories. She might put sandwiches in one column, side dishes in another, and beverages in a third. Encourage her to use as many adjectives as possible: "Creamy peanut butter and sweet grape jelly on whole-wheat bread" or "Crunchy orange carrots with cool ranch dip." Use your child's ideas to pack the food, and then display her menu at your picnic!

## 3. Author mail

Children love to write to authors—and they're thrilled when they get an e-mail or a letter back. Help your youngster find the e-mail or regular address of her favorite author or poet by typing his name into a search engine (such as Yahoo or Google). In her note, suggest that she say which of his books she likes best and why. For instance, she could tell Arnold Lobel, "Owl at Home is my favorite because Owl is scared of his own feet!" Remind your child to ask the author a question or two (example: "How old were you when your first book was published?"). Finally, help her proofread her note by checking that each sentence begins with a capital letter and ends with a period.

## 4. Game rules

Has your youngster ever played Dinosaur Hide-and-Seek? How about Musical Tag? Ask him to invent a new game and create a set of rules for it. He'll learn to write clear instructions. You may need to prompt him with questions, such as "What do you do first?" or "How do you win the game?" For Dinosaur Hide-and-Seek, he might list: (1) Pick one person to be "It." (2) Everyone else hides. (3) "It" counts to 10. (4) Everyone roars like a dinosaur. (5) "It" follows the sounds to find them. (6) The first person he finds wins and is "It."





## 5. Daily summary

Challenge your child to choose each word carefully when she writes. Give her a small notepad. Each evening, have her write the date at the top of a page. Then, help her write about her day in six words. *Example:* "I read two new books in school." She'll learn to keep her writing specific and concise. And at the end of the month, she'll have a record of everything she did!

## 6. Comedy skit

Your youngster will be motivated to write with this laugh-out-loud activity. For one week, ask each person to find something that makes him laugh, and write it down. You might help your son jot down a joke that a friend told him or a funny line from a TV show. You could find a funny article in the newspaper.



At the end of the week, have a stand-up comedy night. Everyone takes a turn reading what they wrote.

## 7. Packing list

Is your child planning a sleepover at Grandma's, or is your family taking a vacation? Ask your youngster to make a list of everything she'll need. She'll see that writing is practical. Remind her to include clothes, toothbrush and toothpaste, books, toys, and snacks. Or suggest that she make a list for an imaginary trip to anyplace she likes (the moon, a castle, under the sea). What special supplies would each place require? (a spacesuit for the moon)



## 8. Message in a bottle

Keep in touch with your youngster while encouraging him to practice writing. Write a message for him on a piece of paper, roll it up, and slip it into an empty, dry water bottle (make sure the paper is sticking out of the bottle so it's easy to get the message out). Leave the bottle in his room. After he reads his message, he can write one back to you and put it in your room. Continue leaving messages every day.

## 9. Advertisement

Help your child practice persuasive writing by creating an advertisement. If you're having a yard sale or hiring a babysitter, let her help you write a classified newspaper ad. Or she can help you write descriptions of household items to sell on eBay ([www.ebay.com](http://www.ebay.com)) or Craigslist ([www.craigslist.com](http://www.craigslist.com)). Talk about ways to describe objects (color, size) and ways to get readers' attention ("perfect condition" or "just like new"). For example, if your youngster has outgrown her bike, she might write: "Pretty pink bike. 12 inch. Looks brand new."



## 10. Reading log

Here's a fun way your child can practice writing while keeping track of what he reads. Help him draw a giant ice cream cone. Next, have him cut circles from colored paper to represent scoops of ice cream (*examples:* pink for strawberry, green for mint chocolate chip). Each time he reads a book, he gets to glue a scoop to his cone. Help him write the title and author along with a sentence about the book on each circle. Encourage other family members to make their own cones and to add scoops for books they read, too.

## 11. Greeting cards

Work on poetry by creating homemade greeting cards. Put your youngster in charge of writing the verses to go inside. She can do this for birthday, anniversary, get-well, and thank-you cards. Help her get ideas by looking through old cards your family has received. Also, you can help her make lists of words that she can use (blue, Sue, new, moo). *Example:* "Roses are red, violets are blue, happy birthday to my Aunt Sue!" Suggest that she fold construction paper in half, write her verse inside, and use markers or crayons to illustrate her card.

## 12. Family announcements

Your child is probably familiar with morning announcements at school. Together, discuss what they usually contain (results of games or tournaments, schedule for upcoming events). Then, help your youngster write weekly announcements to keep everyone in your house up-to-date. Each Sunday evening, she can post a list on the refrigerator: "Jake's soccer team won on Saturday" or "Mom has a job interview on Monday." *Idea:* Help her make stationery for her announcements on the computer or by hand and add a special heading ("Radcliffe Family News").

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