

# Family Literacy Tip



## 7 Great Ways to Encourage Writing at Home

If your child struggles with writing, it's important to find new and exciting ways to encourage writing. Here are some creative strategies to try.

### 1. Write a “Convince Me!” letter

Writing isn't just about telling stories or reporting on books. There are many ways your child can use words, including trying to convince others to agree with her. You can help her practice this type of writing by letting her argue with you—in writing! Choose a topic you don't agree on, such as allowance or bedtime. Have your child write you a letter trying to convince you to change your mind. The catch? She has to use facts, quotes and logic to back up her argument.

### 2. Play a game with pictures

Photos and images are great story sparkers. Do a web search and find a few interesting images. Or cut out pictures from magazines. The pictures can be realistic, such as a photo of students on a playground. Or they can be fantastical images, such as a superhero flying in space. Glue a couple images into a notebook. Then ask your child to write about one of them. You can prompt her, asking her to include what she sees, what the people are thinking, what will happen next — or just let her imagination run free.

### 3. Play “Tell Me How”

In this activity your child pretends she's writing to a space alien who doesn't know anything about our culture. This alien does everything exactly as it's said or written. Your child's job is to choose an everyday task, like brushing her teeth or making a sandwich. Then, she needs to write step-by-step directions about how to do the task for the alien. When she's done, you get to be the alien and try to follow the steps exactly as she wrote them. She may be surprised at what she left out!

### 4. Make an “I Can” book

As your child learns to write, she'll also be learning other new skills. Making an “I Can” book will let her practice writing skills and keep track of her other accomplishments. Staple together a bunch of blank sheets of paper to make a book. As your child reaches a new milestone, such as learning to tie her shoes or hit a baseball, she can draw a picture on a new page of the book. Younger kids can then

write, "I can tie my shoes." Older kids can write a few sentences about what they've accomplished.

### **5. Play "Fortunately/Unfortunately"**

This turn-taking writing game is based on a classic kids' book by Remy Charlip called Fortunately. In it, something lucky happens and then something unlucky happens. Each event is introduced by either the word "fortunately" or the word "unfortunately." To play, take a piece of paper and write a sentence beginning with "Fortunately," such as "Fortunately it was a sunny day. I wanted to play outside." Pass the paper to the next player, who will add an "unfortunately" sentence, such as "Unfortunately, I had to clean my room." Keep going until the story is too silly to continue.

### **6. Make a journal jar**

A journal doesn't have to be a diary. It can also be a book where your child writes about ideas or answers questions, like "If you could do anything next summer, what would you choose?" A journal jar is a place to keep all those ideas and questions. Wash and decorate a wide-mouthed jar, like one that used to contain peanut butter. Then, write or print out journal prompts on slips of paper. Ask your child to pull out one prompt each day and write about it in her journal.

### **7. Create a family scrapbook**

A family scrapbook is a great way to save memories and jump-start your child's writing. Use an inexpensive photo album to keep souvenirs of things you do together. This can include photos, ticket stubs, and found objects, like pretty leaves. Your child can begin by writing the date and a line about where you were and what you did. Then, you can work together to write a more detailed summary. Don't forget to include funny or even annoying memories!