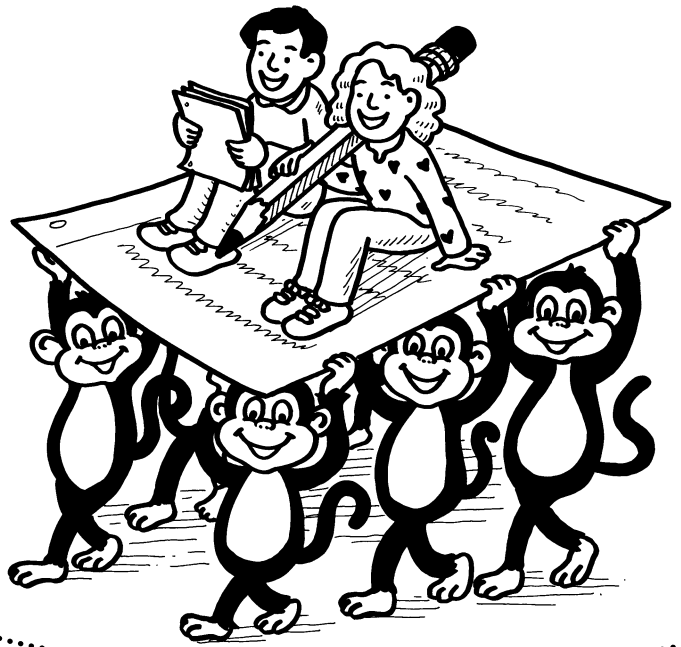


It's Fun to Write!

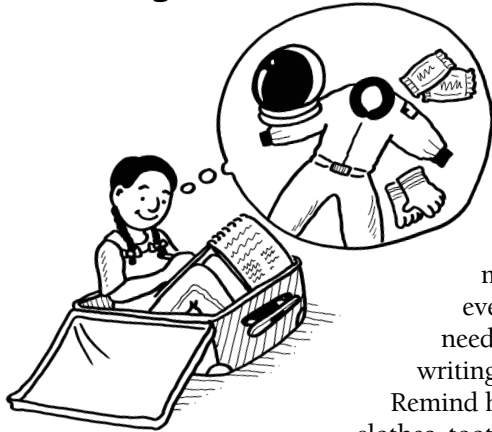
All kinds of writing practice can fit easily into your child's days. With the 10 activities in this guide, he'll write to entertain, inform, and even persuade his readers. And he'll build skills like using descriptive language, being specific, adding details, and more.



1. Family survey

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

2. 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. *Idea:* Suggest that she make a list for an imaginary trip to anyplace she likes (the moon, a castle, ocean floor). She can think about what special supplies each place would require. Perhaps she'd pack a space suit and freeze-dried food for the moon, or scuba gear and a waterproof camera for an undersea adventure.

3. 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 him to look in the refrigerator and pantry to decide what you'll eat. Fold a sheet of paper into thirds, and help him write the names of the foods in categories. He might put sandwiches in one column, side dishes in another, and drinks in a third. Encourage him to use as many adjectives as possible: "Creamy peanut butter and sweet strawberry slices on whole-wheat bread" or "Crunchy orange carrots with cool ranch dip." Use your child's ideas to pack the food, and then display his menu at your picnic!

4. Comedy skit

Your youngster will be motivated to write with this laugh-out-loud activity. For one week, ask each family member to find something that makes her laugh, and write it down. You could help your child jot down a joke that a friend told her or a silly line from a TV show. Or write your own original jokes! At the end of the week, hold a stand-up comedy night. Everyone takes a turn reading their funny material.



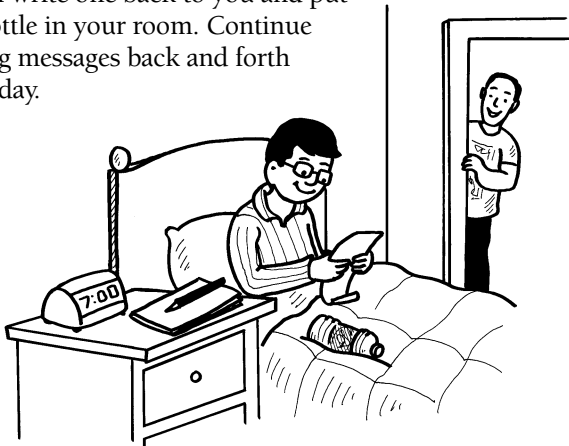
5. Greeting cards

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. Give her ideas by showing her old cards your family has received. Also, you could help her make lists of words to use (*blue, Sue, new, shoe*). Example: "Roses are red, violets are blue, Happy Birthday to my Aunt Sue!" Suggest that your child fold construction paper in half, write her verse inside, and use markers or crayons to illustrate her card.



6. Message in a bottle

Keep in touch with your youngster while encouraging him to write. Secretly 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 pull out). Leave the bottle in his room. After he reads his message, he can write one back to you and put the bottle in your room. Continue leaving messages back and forth every day.



7. Advertisement

Have your child practice persuasive writing by creating an advertisement. If you're holding a yard sale or hiring a babysitter, let her help you write a classified newspaper ad. Or she can suggest descriptions of household items to sell online. Talk about ways to describe objects (color, size) and how to get readers' attention ("perfect condition" or "one of a kind"). For example, if your youngster has outgrown her bike, she might write, "Lime green bike. 12 inch. Looks brand new."

8. Family announcements

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

9. Author mail

Your youngster can write to her favorite author or poet! Together, find the person's email or regular address by typing his name and "fan mail" into a search engine. In her letter, suggest that she say which of his books she likes best and why. For instance, she could tell Mo Willems, "*Knuffle Bunny* is my favorite because I have a favorite stuffed animal who goes places with me, too!" 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.

10. 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 the players.
6. The last person he finds wins and becomes "It."

