



# Supporting Early Learners

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**Partners in Learning**

**Partners in Learning** believes that children have the best possible chance to reach their full potential when educators and parents work in partnership to provide supportive learning environments.



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## IssueThree: Writing: Getting Ideas Down

The literacy topic for this issue is: **Writing: Getting Ideas Down**. That is, thinking of what to write and getting it down on paper. On page four you will find our sections: Parents Ask, Recommended Resource, and Numeracy.

Think about when your child started to talk and how delighted you were when they first tried to say 'Mommy' or 'Daddy'. You accepted all attempts, continued to model how to say words correctly, and celebrated each success. It took time for your child to move from babbling to saying first words, then stringing several words together, and eventually being able to carry on a conversation. In fact, it took several years.

Learning to write is very much like learning to talk; both are developmental. The process of writing begins when children scribble, draw, and pretend write. Next, they begin to print letters and use combinations of letters or words to label and print words that are important to them. Eventually, they learn to spell many words correctly and write simple sentences or even short paragraphs. This is an incredible and fascinating journey that takes place over a period of approximately three years.

Early learners grow as writers when they write frequently, have encouragement to come up with ideas, and one on one support to revise and edit their writing. This helps them to become better writers every time they write.

## Writing: Getting Ideas Down

**What do we see children doing in their writing as they progress from preschool to the end of grade one?**

- use drawings to tell stories
- show an interest in wanting to write like you
- understand that print carries a message; it is talk written down
- engage in pretend writing that looks like scribbles, lines, and symbols
- add pretend writing to go with their drawings
- begin to print letters of the alphabet randomly
- start trying to use some letters to represent words
- print meaningful words like their name
- draw and sketch with more details
- use their pictures as a means to tell or retell their message
- use beginning and ending sounds as words to label or title their drawings
- use sounding out to print words; this is called invented spelling
- may be able to spell and print some words correctly
- use more print to go with their drawings
- use writing for a purpose; lists and notes
- read back correctly what they have written
- are able to write a message that others can read
- write about topics that are meaningful to them
- use writing for various purposes on their own initiative
- use punctuation and capitalization correctly and for effect
- write stories with a beginning, middle, and end

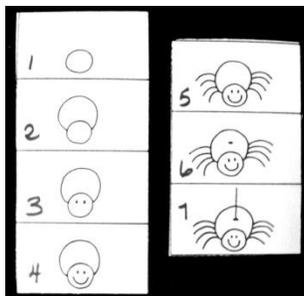
**What can you do to support your child's growth and development in writing?**

- provide opportunities to draw and **talk** about their drawings
- create an area with interesting materials: chalk, slates, markers, and white boards
- show that writing is used in everyday life: calendars, shopping lists, cards, emails
- provide opportunities for personal writing attempts like thank you cards
- promote a positive attitude that your child is a writer and can do it
- celebrate your child as an author by displaying drawings and writing
- ask questions such as: "What is happening in your drawing?" followed by "Tell me more about it."
- help your child write words or sentences that go with their drawings

**What verbal prompts can you use to encourage the revising and editing stages?**

- Can I show you how to spell that word?
- Let's read your story out loud and see if it sounds right.
- Let's read your story together and think about what we can add.
- That's the way the word sounds but this is the way it is spelled.
- Let's add a describing word here or add an interesting detail.
- I think we need a capital (or upper case) letter here.
- I think we need a period, question, or exclamation mark here.
- How about if we use the computer to revise and edit your story together?

The following activities have been chosen because they are age appropriate and take advantage of children wanting to draw and write what is personally important to them.



**My Turn; Your Turn Drawing:** This is a great activity to help your child draw. Look for simple pictures that can be broken down into steps such as the example shown. Fold a piece of paper in half and draw the first part on one side. Then, have your child copy what you have drawn as a first step on the other side. Continue using the language: ‘*It is my turn, now it is your turn.*’ until the picture is completed. The purpose of this activity is to encourage children to hold crayons and pencils correctly, improve strength and mobility of fingers, help develop hand-eye coordination, and experience success in drawing something they are interested in. The activity can be expanded by adding a word or sentence to go with the picture.



**Alphabet Books:** Help your child create their very own alphabet book by using personal photographs, their own drawings, and pictures from magazines. Make a collection for each letter of the alphabet and glue them on to letter sized paper. We find it works well to insert each page in a plastic paper protector and collect the pages in a binder. Throughout this activity you can promote oral language by discussing the pictures and how letters and letter sounds match. By adding labels and sentences, you will help your child see that letters make up words and words make up sentences. This is a long term project; enjoy it over a period of time.



**Frame Books:** Frame books are a scaffold to help children see themselves as writers and write a book of their own. Collect pictures such as the one on the left that show things that your child can do. We like to use small photo albums that hold one picture per page and then write a sentence to go with the picture. This picture was used in a book called; ‘*I Can*’ and each page had a picture and a sentence such as: *I can slide. I can ride my bike. I can help make my bed. I can ski. I can help with the dishes.* Other ideas for frames or sentence starters are: *I like . . . This is my . . . I see a . . . Red is for . . .* Children enjoy rereading these books.



**Possible Sentences:** Use a photograph of your child doing something they really liked. Talk about the picture and what was happening. *What are you doing? Where are you? What made it fun?* Together, make a list of words to go with the picture. Then, make up possible sentences to tell about the picture using some of the words on the list. Then decide on one good sentence to go with the picture that can be written down. At first, you can do the printing for your child. It won’t be long before your child will be willing to do some of the printing and will want to add more sentences. When you are finished, try reading the word list and the sentence or sentences. Children love to make a book of these pages, put them in a binder, and read them over and over.

## Parents Ask: My child keeps reversing the 'b' and 'd' when printing. How can I help?

First of all reversing the 'b' and 'd' is very common with early learners so don't panic. However, overcoming this confusion is a good idea so it doesn't persist and become a habit that is hard to break. Teach left handed children to say 'Boston Pizza' and at the same time use their left hand to make a 'b'. Teach right handed children to say 'Dairy Queen' and at the same time use their right hand to make a 'd'. Children don't usually need to use both Boston Pizza and Dairy Queen. This technique also looks after the 'p' and 'q' reversal. Just point your thumb down and the 'b' becomes a 'p' for pizza and the 'd' becomes a 'q' for queen.



'b'



'd'

### Recommended Resource: Google: National Geographic Little Kids

We found this was the easiest way to access this part of the National Geographic website. You will find they have an interesting number of tabs to further explore: Animals, Games, Crafts and Recipes, Science Experiments, Videos, and Parents. You might also want to consider a subscription to their National Geographic Kids magazine written especially for children ages 3 to 6.

### Numeracy: Measurement

Providing young children with lots of experiences using a variety of measuring tools develops the language and concepts of length, mass or weight, volume, and area. A fun way to begin measuring activities is to use invented measuring devices such as ribbons, sticks, plastic containers, rocks, or boxes. For instance, using a ribbon, help your child find things in the house that are either shorter or longer than the piece of ribbon. Later, children can use real measuring devices such as rulers, measuring tapes and cups, as well as scales. Exposing children to measurement activities in a playful way encourages the language and concept of measurement.

**Length:** long, longer, longest, short, shorter, shortest, tall, taller, tallest, or similar

**Weight:** light, lighter, lightest, heavy, heavier, heaviest, or similar

**Volume:** less, more, bigger, biggest, smaller, smallest, most, least, or similar

**Area:** least, greatest, big, small, almost the same, or the same

Examples of playful activities include:

- Measure your children's height asking questions such as "Who is taller? Who is shorter? Who is the tallest in the family?" This can also be done with toys such as stuffed animals, cars, dolls, or blocks. These toys can be put in order of shortest to tallest or lightest to heaviest.
- Using the fruit bowl, talk about the biggest apple, the smallest apple, and two apples that are similar or the same in size.
- Make dishwashing fun! "Which glass holds more, the least, or the same amount of water?"
- Children love to play with containers during bath time.
- Let your child play with canned goods. "Which can is the heaviest? Which is the lightest? Which two cans are similar? "Which cans are the same?"
- Using blocks of the same size ask: "How many blocks does it take to cover the area of a placemat, the coffee table, or their desk?"