

Raising Readers: Tips for Parents

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LITERACY CLINIC

Promoting Writing in Grades 3-5

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When I talk to parents and students, they often groan when the topic of writing comes up in the conversation. For example, students may complain, "I don't like to write," "writing is boring," or "writing is hard." Parents may report, "I don't have any idea how to help my child with writing." While writing may be challenging for some students, it is a key skill that they will need to develop for success in school. Furthermore, with higher expectations for writing for children in all grade levels, there is a great need for teachers and parents to work together to promote children's writing development.

Writing is a complex set of skills and strategies that is best developed through frequent practice and real-life applications. This column offers useful background information for parents about writing development and instruction. It also offers 10 easy-to-implement ideas for parents and children to use at home that focus on beginning writers in grades 3-5.



What Can Parents Do to Promote Writing at Home for Children in Grades 3-5?



1. Children can improve their writing by "reading like a writer." When your child reads, encourage him or her to notice what the author does to make the writing interesting, entertaining, or informative. Ask your child what writing trait or traits he or she has learned at school. Ask your child to explain that trait to you and to share how the author uses that trait in his or her writing.
2. Invite your child to write a new ending to a favorite story, television show, or movie.



3. Write a family newsletter together.
 - a. Have your child brainstorm what to include in the newsletter (pre-writing).
 - b. Ask your child to select an idea to write about, and have him or her write a first draft (write).
 - c. Read the draft with your child and discuss how to improve the writing by choosing more interesting words and improving the organization (revision).
 - d. Work with your child to read the revised draft closely to check for correct spelling, grammar, and punctuation (editing).
 - e. Have your child prepare a final draft by re-writing the piece neatly or typing it on the computer. Finally, have your child share the newsletter with other family members by reading it aloud, mailing it to family members, or posting it on the family bulletin board or refrigerator (publishing).
4. Word choice is an important writing trait. To help your child develop a good understanding of the importance of word choice, work together to keep a list of interesting words, phrases, and sentences from things you read together.
5. Provide access to a computer at home or the public library so your child can develop typing skills and easily write, revise, edit, and publish stories, email messages, and other writing pieces.

Questions or Comments?

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7. Encourage your child to write, revise, edit, and publish a story online at this free website for children:
<http://www.kidscom.com/create/write/write.html>
Your child can also read, vote on, and take the weekly challenge at this website.
8. Children love to write letters to pen pals or key pals (email pen pals). To find a pen pal from another country, consult this kid-friendly website:
<http://www.studentsoftheworld.info/>
9. Give your child a spiral notebook, composition book, or binder that contains notebook paper. Have your child decorate the book and name it. For example, some children may want to call it a diary or journal, and other children may want to call it an idea book or log. Encourage your child to write in the book several times a week. Some writing ideas that may interest your child are:
 - a. Writing a story that includes several chapters.
 - b. Writing about hobbies or interests.
 - c. Writing about television programs, movies, or video games.
 - d. Writing about a favorite sports team.
 - e. Writing about a special event, holiday, or outing.
10. Get your child involved in practical writing that adults do such as writing invitations, thank you notes, or directions.
11. Write a progressive story with your child or family. One of you will begin by writing the opening paragraph. Pass the story to the next person who will add a paragraph. Continue to pass the story from one person to the next, until one of you writes an ending. Read the whole story aloud and enjoy.

