

Golden Rules

Getting the balance right between making writing fun AND keeping up regular short bursts of writing practice can be tricky at times. Here are some dos and don'ts to help you out.

- ✓ **DO** encourage your child to draw and paint by providing crayons, felt-tips and paints and a table where they can do these activities whenever they want! The more they are doing this type of activity, the more they will want to write.
- ✓ **DO** involve your child with writing that you do. Encourage them to contribute to making a list, even if they only write the first letter of some items.
- ✗ **DON'T** point out every mistake your child makes when they write. Children need encouragement and positive reinforcement to be confident, and a confident child makes a better learner.
- ✓ **DO** praise your child's efforts, even if you think she's not trying her best! Learning to write is a tiring and lengthy business. It is really important to keep your child motivated.
- ✓ **DO** stop to look at any pictures your child produces and talk about them. Encourage them to sign their pictures (all great artists do this!) and perhaps to write a caption.
- ✗ **DON'T** forget how important your input and attention is – just a little writing done twice a week will help your child to WANT to learn to write and to understand how important you think their writing is.

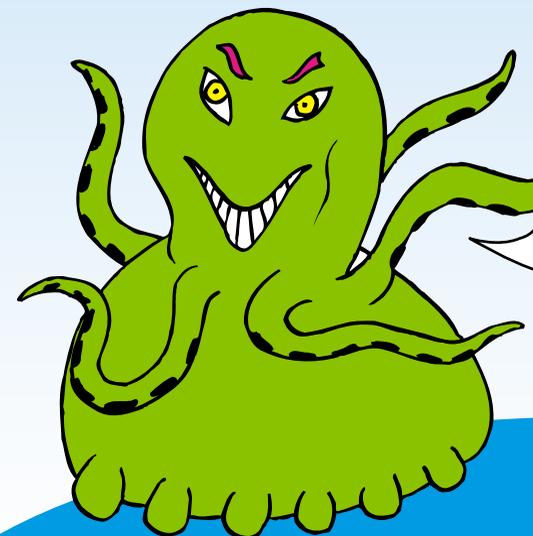


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Your Child with...

WRITING



I want to write my name! Which hand should I use?

AGES: INFANT



Simple advice on helping an infant child with writing...

Writing is a very complex skill. In fact it takes most of us our whole school-life to fully master it. We should try not to underestimate this as we help our young children get started with learning to write.

Start with talking: Believe it or not, learning to form letters is the easy part of writing. Thinking clearly and knowing how to express our ideas is much more tricky! The best way to get there is to talk to your child and, crucially, listen when they speak. Before anything can be written, it must be spoken first!

Provide opportunities for writing: Try to provide a small writing and drawing area (an upturned box?) for your child somewhere in your home. Ideally they are able to sit at this whenever they want, and have access to scrap paper, pencils, crayons, felt-tips, scissors, sellotape™ or glue. You will be surprised how much time children will spend at this writing 'table'.

Reluctant writers: Even the most reluctant writers enjoy new kinds of writing. You can draw on the ground outside with chalk, or on windows with special window-crayons, or even use bath crayons. Likewise, make it possible for your

child to write or draw as part of his play - after all pirates often need treasure maps, footballers need results tables and every astronaut could use a well kitted-out cardboard rocket.

The idea's the thing: When you look at some of your child's writing, try not to focus first on the handwriting. You do not want her to think that you value how her writing looks far more than what it says. Of course presentation and legible handwriting are VERY important but they are not as important as having a good idea and phrasing it well. It is easy to discourage children - which is always counter-productive!

A helping hand: 'You do it for me!' Every child lacks confidence at some point as they start out learning to write. There isn't any harm in showing your child how to write or draw something every now and then but ask them to help you as you do so. 'What sounds can you hear at the end of this word?'

Keeping it real: If children can see that writing has a real purpose they are far more likely to be interested in mastering it. Involve your child in writing birthday card messages, ask him to make a 'don't-forget' note to stick on the front door or get him to mark important dates on the calendar.

