

Supporting Common Core State Standards

Strengthen your child's writing skills

The Common Core State Standards have created a shift in writing objectives for students. Students will now be expected to write for a variety of purposes and to compose more extensive pieces of writing. Since writing is a skill that gets stronger with practice, the best way to support your child's writing efforts is to encourage writing at home. Here are 10 simple ways to do just that:

1 Keep your child supplied. The times may be high-tech, but her writing materials don't need to be. Keep her desk stocked with pens, markers and paper.

2 Include your child in writing-related tasks. If you're sending out a stack of holiday cards, have him help address the envelopes. If you are heading to the grocery store, ask him to help you make the list.

3 Introduce your child to your world. If you write at work, tell her about it. "This is a report I wrote. It took a long time to finish, but it turned out really well." Point out how the writing skills she's learning now—such as how to be clear and concise—may someday help her in her own career.

4 Boost your child's vocabulary. Share a new word with your child each week. It may seem like he doesn't notice, but that new word just may turn up in his writing someday!

5 Give your child a journal to record her private thoughts. Encourage her to write in it every night. Or have her keep a family diary during a vacation.

6 Enlist a pen pal. See if a family friend or relative will be your child's pen pal. Ask this person to send him a handwritten letter every month. After your child receives it, he should write a reply.

7 Ask your child to put requests in writing. The next time your child wants something, have her write down exactly what she wants and why. Tell her to address objections she thinks you might have. Can her writing persuade you?

8 Exchange notes with your child. Write short notes and put them in his backpack or under his pillow. Ask him to write you back.

9 Empower your child to express her opinions. Is she unhappy with a product? Have her write to the company. Is she upset about something in your town? Have her write a letter to the editor.

10 Be supportive. Every writer needs an audience—but not an overly critical one. If your child shows his writing to you, be encouraging. Focus on what you like. For progress in writing ability to occur, kids need to feel secure and confident about writing.

