

The Reading-Writing Link



How can your youngster become a strong, well-rounded writer? By being a strong, well-rounded reader! Experts agree: kids who read frequently—and enjoy a wide variety of materials—are better writers. Try these ideas for helping your child make the important connection between reading and writing.

Letters to the editor

This activity encourages your youngster to read magazine articles and write an opinion piece.

First, have him read a few letters to the editor to see what they include (the writer's views, facts from the article). Then, your child could write a response to an article that interests him. Adding supporting facts from the story will make his letter stronger. *Example:* "Your article stated that the average American drinks 21 gallons of bottled water per year. I think that more people should drink water from reusable bottles to help the environment."

When he's finished, he can proofread his letter for errors and send it off to the address listed in the magazine.



Fan fiction

Trending now: fans writing stories inspired by their favorite books. Is there a book your youngster loves? She could write a story with the same theme—but put her own twist on it.

For example, many books written for kids this age deal with growing up, relationships with parents and friends, or going to school. Her main character may be struggling with middle school friendships like the characters in the book she read, but perhaps she'll set her story in New York City instead of Alaska. Or if the main character is an only child, she can make the girl in her story a twin instead.

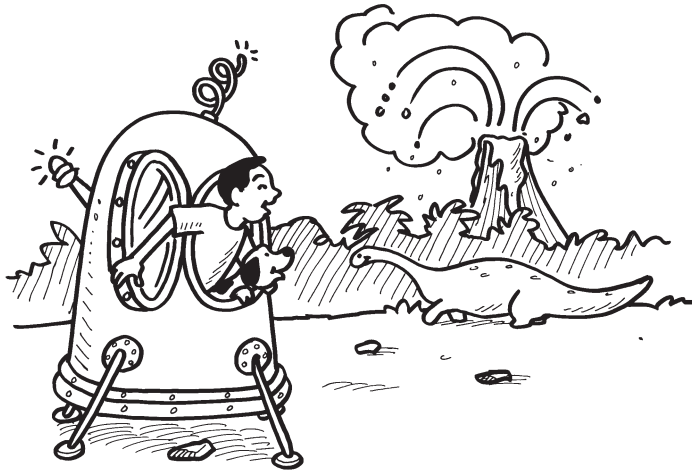
As she explores the original book and decides how to slant her version, her comprehension of the events will deepen. And she just might like her story better than the original one!



New genres

What kind of tales does your youngster usually write? Invite him to take a detour and try something different! For instance, if he normally writes realistic fiction, he could experiment with science fiction or mystery.

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To start, let him read a few books in the genre he chooses and think about what the plots have in common. Science fiction often revolves around futuristic science and technology, and it might be set in outer space or in another time. A mystery is centered around a puzzling event (often a crime) and a main character who spends most of the book solving the puzzle.

Once your child has figured out the key ingredients in a genre, he can outline a plot and try his hand at it. Exploring a new genre will give him more outlets for reading *and* writing.

Movie reviews

Reading and writing about movies can add to the enjoyment of watching them.

Suggest that your youngster read newspaper or online reviews of a movie she wants to watch. Encourage her to notice writing techniques like using an attention-grabbing introduction or including only certain details of the plot. Also, what adjectives does she see? Instead of saying a film was *good* or *bad*, the reviewer probably chooses more specific words like *memorable*, *realistic*, or *enthralling*.

Then, after seeing the movie, your child can write her own review. She may use the techniques she observed—or come up with her own. Finally, she could send her review to friends and relatives to help them decide whether to watch the movie.



Success with school papers

When your child has an essay or a report to write, he will first need to do research. Here are tips to help him read source material for the information he needs.

Read, then write. After reading a paragraph or section, have him close the book and write a summary. Using this method—instead of taking notes with the book open—can help him avoid copying word for word. Also, he will be more likely to understand his notes later if he uses his own words.

Stay on topic. Encourage your youngster to write the main idea of his report or essay in big letters on a piece of paper and keep it in sight as he does research. (*Example:* “There are pros and cons to the Electoral College.”) This will keep

him focused on information tied to his topic, since it’s easy to jump from link to link online and wind up in unrelated places. He should also check copyright dates in books and on websites to make sure the information is current.

Compare sources. Suggest that your child read several books or articles to cross-check information and write a factually accurate paper. He could write the “5 W” questions (who, what, when, where, why) down the left side of a sheet of paper and list his sources across the top. Then, he can draw a grid and fill in the boxes with the answers to the questions. Are the answers the same from multiple sources? If so, they’re more likely to be correct.

