

Supporting Young English Learners with Writing Notebooks

Regional Educational Laboratories
West, Northwest,
Northeast & Islands

From the National Center for Education Evaluation at IES

Families and caregivers, you play an important role in your child's language learning. The purpose of this activity is to help children develop their writing and language skills by developing a writing routine that includes talking about their writing and writing every day. You will support your child to record their thoughts, feelings, ideas, and new words in a writing notebook.

Keep in mind:

- You and your child can use your home language or English, whichever is strongest for you.
- Talking and writing in your home language will also help your child with English.
- Enjoy this time with your child. Learning together is fun!



Why focus on speaking and writing?

Children strengthen oral and written language when talking with someone before, during, and after writing.

Learning Goal: Children will build oral and written language skills

Grades: 2nd–5th grade

Materials: A writing notebook or paper, a pencil or a pen

Let's get started!

Follow the steps below. See the back for additional language supports to help your child be a successful writer.

Step 1: Shaping Ideas for Writing

- There are so many different reasons why we might write! Help your child **choose a purpose for their writing**, such as to tell a story or describe an event in their day.
- **Plan the big ideas and key points** your child can include.
- **Discuss special vocabulary or language** your child might use. For example, a friendly letter often starts *Dear ___* and might close with *Your friend, ___*. Language to connect ideas might be a statement such as *What happened next might surprise you*, or your child could use sequencing words such as *first*, *second*, *next*, or *after*.

Step 2: Writing Time

- Encourage your child to **write independently**.
- **Check in from time to time** to ensure they are successful in the writing activity.

Step 3: Discuss the Writing

- At the end of the day or when the writing is complete, **ask your child to share their writing**.
- **Have a conversation about their writing** and the ideas, vocabulary and language you talked about before they wrote. For example, ask them about an idea they had trouble writing about. Discuss what your child is most proud of, or what part they like best. (See *Language Supports to Help Your Child After Writing*).

Supports to Help Your Child *Before* Writing

Ideas for Independent Writing

- Compose a friendly letter
- Share about a book you read, or a story you heard
- Make up a story
- Tell about an activity you like doing
- Write about your favorite place to be and why
- Recount the funniest/scariest/weirdest thing that happened to you recently
- Describe a superpower you want and why you want it

Ways for Your Child to Prepare for Writing

- Provide a place for your child to write
- Talk with your child about what they plan to draw or write
- Encourage your child to draw the idea or story
- Act out an idea or a story with your child



Language Supports to Help Your Child *After* Writing

Ways to Offer Feedback to Your Child

- Read your writing aloud. Did you use all your ideas and vocabulary?
- Is there something that was challenging to write?
- Is there a sentence that seemed to go on too long?
- Are your ideas connected and in order?
- Could you add any details to make your writing more interesting?

Ways Your Child Can Stretch Their Language When Talking About Writing

Today I wrote about _____.

I chose this topic because _____.

One thing I did to get ready to write is _____.

Some new words or phrases I used are _____ and _____.

This part of my writing was difficult because _____.

I'm especially proud of this part of my work because _____.

One part of my writing I want to share with you is _____.