

Especially for parents of preschoolers! 

Adventure in a Box

 *Literacy Learning Experiences*

Have fun creating a special writing box with your preschooler! A box filled with inspiring writing materials can help your budding writer build confidence and skills.

What is the practice?

Writing becomes a special event for children ages 3-5 when they make their own writing boxes. With a writing box, a young child begins to see himself as a writer—one with good ideas to express and all the tools needed to express them. Homemade writing boxes keep writing materials in one place, close at hand, for whenever your child gets the writing spark.



What does the practice look like?

Fill a box with many materials that your preschool child can use to draw, write, and create. Place the writing box somewhere in your home where your child can reach it easily. The box should hold writing tools that interest your child and motivate her to write. For example, have markers or pencils in her favorite colors, or a note pad in the shape of her favorite animal.

How do you do the practice?

Start with an ordinary cardboard box, large enough to hold papers and writing tools. Help your child cover it in whatever way pleases her. Some easy choices are gift wrap, craft paper, plastic shelf liner, or magazine pages.

- After covering the box, encourage your child to decorate it. She can use stickers, stamps, drawings, or whatever else she wants. Fill the box with lots of writing materials. Include small packs of crayons, wide lined paper, construction paper, pencils, small notebooks, washable markers, and erasable colored pencils. Add envelopes, a roll of tape, and bright stickers to make pre-writing and writing even more fun.
- Use small sets of pencils, markers, crayons, and paper so that making choices and cleaning up are easier.
- Crayons that don't roll, extra-thick pencils and markers, and child-sized scissors with rounded points work well for preschoolers who are developing fine-motor control.
- Encourage your child to use the box for writing letters to grandparents. She can also use it to make lists and to draw and create stories for you to read together.

How do you know the practice worked?

- Does your child spend time using the materials in the writing box?
- Does she show you books, cards, papers, and other writings that she has created?
- Has your child shown interest in trying to write with different tools?
- Is she exploring new uses for writing?

Take a look at more fun with writing boxes

Rainy-Day Writing

Four-year-old Eric is restless on a rainy afternoon. He looks out the living-room window and says, "Water's on the road." "Where do you think all that water goes?" asks his mother. "The ocean!" he says. "I wonder how it gets there," Mom muses. "It's a long trip," says Eric. "It is?" asks his mother. "I know, why don't you write me a story about the water's trip to the ocean?" Eric gets his writing box from a low shelf and pulls out papers and markers. Mom staples some of the paper together, making a booklet. Eric draws pictures across the pages, telling her all about the water. Mom writes his words on the bottom of each page. When the story is finished, Eric's mother reads his story aloud to him. Eric takes more paper from his box. He makes a cover for the book, drawing random shapes to "write" the title. When he's finished, his mother staples the cover to the book and sets it up on a shelf for display.



Pictures and Stories



Three-year-old Mari's mother finds her at the kitchen table absorbed in drawing. The table is covered with markers, crayons, and paper from the homemade writing box Mari keeps in the cabinet under the kitchen sink. Kneeling next to Mari's chair, Mom asks about her drawing. Mari says she's making a rabbit. "What's the rabbit doing?" asks her mom. "Hopping," Mari answers, drawing lines and dots for "hops" across the paper. Then she adds lines around the figure to show "where he goes." Mari reaches for a different marker and colors a spot on the picture. "Oh! That's a pretty color," comments her mother. Mari changes markers again and adds more color to the spot. "That looks nice," says her mother. "It's a hat," says Mari. She takes a pen from the box and "writes" on the page. Her mother pretends to read the writing. "That's a neat story, Mari," says her mother.

Special Greetings

Five-year-old Liam has a disorder that affects his fine-motor skills. Hearing that his grandma is ill, Liam tells his father that he's going to make her a get-well card. "Great idea!" says Dad. Liam takes his writing box from his toy shelf. He sits at his small table, and pulls out paints and a paintbrush easy for him to grasp. His father clips heavy paper from the box onto a drawing board so that the paper won't slide around. Liam finds some stickers in the box and puts them on the paper. He uses the paints to add large areas of bright color. The paintbrush is non-rolling, so Liam can set it down and pick it up with ease. He asks his father how to spell "Feel better soon, Grandma." His father patiently sounds out the letters and waits as Liam slowly writes each one with a thick marker. "Grandma's going to love that card!" says Liam's father.

