

Especially for parents of preschoolers! 

Mail Call

 *Drawing and Writing*

When your child sends and receives mail, she can try out writing and see the many uses of print.

What is the practice?

Your child needs to try scribbling, drawing, and using “made up” spelling before she can write in the traditional way. One way to boost her writing interest is to set up a home mail center. This gives her a place to write letters to mail or where family members can leave letters to each other.



What does the practice look like?

A home mail center can be simple. It can be a shoebox or small plastic bin. It's filled with paper, envelopes, pencils or pens and stamps. It can also have old greeting cards, markers, stickers, etc.

How do you do the practice?

Give your child lots of chances to “write” letters. Talk with her about how writing helps her share her thoughts with others.

- When she’s writing a letter, talk about what she knows about letter writing. Tell why people write notes to each other. Talk about how people use the mail and let her know she can use it too.
- Children often have fun with stamps and stickers. Tell her why we use stamps to mail letters. Have ones with different pictures for her to use. If mailing the letter through the postal service, let her put the stamp on her letter. If her letters are for family members at home, she can have fun using different stickers as stamps.
- Talk about things related to mailing letters. For example, show her on a map where a mailed letter is going.
- Talk about addresses, and help her learn your home address.
- Let her use different size envelopes or different types of mailers. This will expand what she knows about mail.
- Put stamped and addressed cards in the mail center. This will show her how letters look when they are mailed.
- Let your child explore letter writing by using different kinds of stationery. She can also use different writing tools, like markers or colored pencils.
- Change things in the mail center to keep your child’s interest. You can switch out the stationery, stamps, or writing materials available. You might try to find seasonal greeting cards at discounted stores for her to use.

How do you know the practice worked?

- Does your child enjoy the materials in the home mail center?
- Does your child “write” letters to others?
- Is your child’s letter writing becoming more traditional and confident?

More invented spelling with preschoolers

Return to Sender

The mail center at Shannon's house has colored markers, paper, envelopes and stickers. Three-year old Shannon uses the markers to scribble "words" on the paper. One day, her mother asks Shannon what she's writing. Shannon says she is writing daddy about their cat, Tiger. When Shannon is done, her mother prints Shannon's words about Tiger on the paper. Shannon puts her letter in an envelope. She picks out a sticker to use for the stamp. Shannon's mother writes "Daddy" on the front of the envelope. They leave it in the mail center. Shannon is happy when there's a letter back from Daddy. His letter tells her he liked reading her story about Tiger.



Dear Grandma

Five-year old Shayla misses her grandmother living in another state. Her mother asks Shayla if she wants to write grandma a letter. Right away, Shayla says, "Yes!" and runs to the mail center. She uses a pencil and paper and prints her name. She then prints short words and letters she knows how to write. She makes up word spellings by putting random letters and squiggles together. She draws a picture of herself at the bottom of the paper. She puts the paper in an envelope. Her mother lets her choose a stamp for it. "The eagle!" says Shayla. Her mother writes grandmother's address on the envelope. She says the words aloud as she writes. Later that day, Shayla's mother lets her place the letter to grandma in their mailbox and raise the red flag for pick-up.

Outgoing Mail

Jonathan's mother set up a home mail center so he can practice writing. Jonathan has a hard time holding small things. His mother put wide-grip markers, large pencils, and large erasers in the center. She also placed a list of family members' addresses in it. Though his fine motor skills are limited, Jonathan can make marks on the paper. He can then pick someone to mail his letter to. One day his mother helps him address an envelope for a letter to his aunt. She talks about addresses and where stamps go on envelopes. They walk outside and put the letter in their home's mailbox. Later his mother shows him on a map where the letter is going.

