

*Especially for parents of preschoolers!* 

# Write Right

 *Drawing and Writing*

Preschoolers are just starting to understand the difference between writing and drawing. Many can write their names and some letters. To be ready to learn adult spelling, they need lots of writing practice. Even using spelling and letter shapes that are not always correct.

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## What is the practice?

**Invented spelling** is having preschoolers **write using whatever letters or symbols they can**. It works best when an adult helps the child “sound out” words and shows interest in the child’s attempts. There are many chances to put invented spelling into your daily routine with your child.



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## What does the practice look like?

By drawing a picture and writing about it with a mix of letters and “sounded-out” words, a child begins learning the rules of writing. In the same way, a child writing his name on a sign for his room, even if letters are missing, learns that he can write things others can understand.

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## How do you do the practice?

You can encourage your child to use invented spelling in lots of ways during the day. Look for chances for writing or drawing. Since you know your child’s personality best, figure out what activities your child likes most.

- Give your child lots of chances to observe and help you with writing during your day. For example, he can help make a grocery list by adding one or two items using invented spelling. Let him leave a note for another family member to find. He can sign his name to a letter you write to a friend. Such activities let your child practice writing and spelling skills and experience some everyday uses for writing.
- Give your preschooler various writing materials, including nontoxic markers, pencils, crayons, greeting cards, construction paper, lined paper, and chalk boards. All of these offer slightly different writing experiences and encourage your child to experiment.
- As your child begins to write, help by showing interest in what he is working on. Remind him to think about the sounds of the letters. Have him spell words the way they sound, rather than spelling them for him. This teaches him to listen for the sounds in words. It also helps him link what he hears with what he writes.
- Encourage your child to “read” her stories or any other written work. This reinforces the link between what she has written and its meaning.

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## How do you know the practice worked?

- Is your child eager and enthusiastic about writing notes, letters, and/or her name?
- Does your child offer to help you with writing in your daily routine?
- Is her writing gradually becoming clearer and more adult-like?

# Take a look at more fun ways to “write right” ...

## Making a List, Checking It Twice

Four-year-old Emma and her dad are getting ready to go to the grocery store. They talk about the items they need to buy. “How are we going to remember all this, Emma?” her dad asks. “Should we write it down?” “I’ll write it,” Emma says, and goes to get paper and a pencil from her room. “Okay, we’ll both make a list,” her dad says. “What’s the first thing we need?” “Apples,” Emma says. “I’m going to write it.” She writes an A, then says the word out loud again to listen for more sounds. “P?” she asks. “I hear *ppp*,” her dad agrees. Emma finishes out the line with a few letter-like shapes. Together, they compose a list this way. “Okay, how about you read it back to me so we make sure we haven’t forgotten anything,” her dad says. Emma frowns at her list a moment, makes a few changes, and then recites a list of grocery items. They consult both lists throughout their trip to the store.



## Write To Say “Thanks”

“Antwan,” Mom calls. “Come here and help me write a thank-you note to your Aunt.” Four-year-old Antwan runs eagerly to the kitchen table. His mom has spread out a variety of stationery, markers, and crayons. “Remember how Aunt Rachel sent you those great presents for your birthday? Well, now we’re going to write her a letter and tell her how much you appreciate them.” “I’m going to draw her a picture,” Antwan says. He reaches for a crayon. “I’ll say, ‘Thank you for the toys, love, Antwan.’ I already know how to write *love* and *Antwan*.” He hesitates. “That’s a good start,” Antwan’s mom says. “Let’s listen to the sounds and figure out how to write the rest of it.”

## Labels for Artwork

Megan, 4½ years old, has been diagnosed with speech and language delays. She loves drawing and painting with her mother. They sit in their playroom together. They use crayons, markers, paints, and pens to create pictures that they hang around the room. “What are you drawing today?” Mom asks. “I draw a princess and a horse,” Megan says, pointing to those figures on her page. “I’m drawing a castle,” her mom says. “And look, I wrote *castle* here so everyone will know what it is.” Megan examines the picture and then asks, “How you write *princess*?” “Listen to how it sounds,” her mom says. “*Ppp... ppp...*” Together they listen for the sounds. Megan writes a *P* followed by a few more letters and marks above her princess. They do the same thing with the horse, the flowers, and the sun in the picture. “Great,” her mom says. “Now we’ll know what everything in the picture is. Can you read it back to me?” Megan takes a deep breath. “This the princess, and this the horse who lives there, and this the flower that lives there, and it sunny.” “You worked hard on that,” her mom says. “We’ll hang that picture up right away.”

