

# I'M A WRITER!

Writing for pleasure can help your child do better in every school subject. And being on the “other side”—as the writer instead of the reader—can boost her reading comprehension. Here are fun activities to spark your youngster’s imagination and get her to write regularly.



## LOVE, ROVER

Authors usually write stories from points of view other than their own. Suggest that your child write from a different perspective by sending letters from a pet.

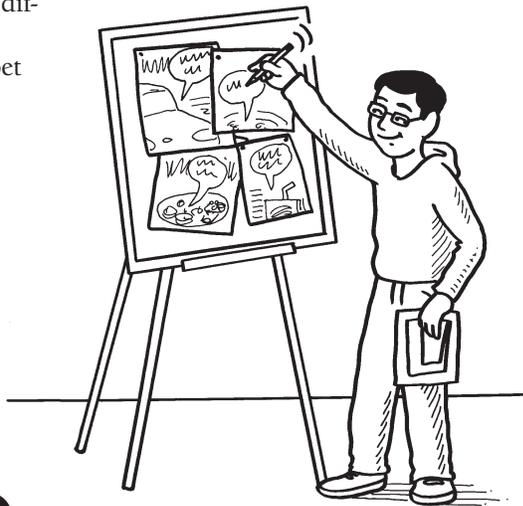
Start by encouraging her to think like your pet (or like a pet she knows). You could ask, “How would Biscuit describe your day today?” For example, she might have the dog write, “I don’t know what’s wrong with my humans. Today they ran in the sprinkler and got wet on purpose!” When she’s finished with her letter, have her mail or email it to a friend’s or relative’s pet. Remind her to ask the other pet to “write” back!

*Tip:* If she doesn’t know a pet to use, she could write a letter from an animal she sees outdoors, such as a bird or a squirrel.

## TALKING HEADS

Here’s a fun way for your youngster to experiment with dialogue. Let him cut out photos from old magazines and glue each one to a separate page of a small notebook.

Ask him to think about what the characters in the pictures might be thinking or saying. He can draw dialogue balloons for each one and fill them in with funny or serious lines. For instance, a new car could say, “Buy me, please. I really want to get out of this showroom and onto the road!”



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## WRITING PROMPTS

Is your youngster stumped for a story topic? Share this fun list of ideas to choose from.

1. Write a first-person tale that begins with the narrator at the top of a Ferris wheel.
2. Develop a plot based on the words to a favorite song.
3. Start with this sentence: “When I grow up, I will tell my grandchildren about the time I \_\_\_\_\_.”



4. What would happen if you woke up one morning and the moon and stars were out instead of the sun?
5. Imagine that your two favorite holidays were combined into one. Describe the celebration.
6. Pick any number from 1 to 100—that is the title for your story.
7. Look out the window. The first person you see will be the main character in your story.
8. Write a “Twitter tale”—a story with no more than 280 characters (including letters, spaces, and punctuation marks).
9. Pretend that you are living on the International Space Station. What is a typical day like?
10. You discover a newspaper dated exactly one year from today—and realize that you’ve traveled into the future. How does your day turn out?

**A DAY IN THE LIFE OF ...**

Encourage your child to explore historical fiction by writing a diary entry. She'll also learn to weave facts into her writing.

Let your youngster choose a person from history who interests her. Perhaps she read about Charles Lindbergh in her history book, or maybe she'd like to get a biography of Martha Washington from the library. Have her use her imagination along with facts from the books to write a diary entry about an important day in the person's life. *Example:* "January 6, 1759: Dear Diary, Today I married Colonel George Washington ..."

**THE BAD-DAY BAG**

Does your child have a friend who is home with a bad cold or who is upset because he didn't make the travel soccer team? Suggest that he try to cheer up his buddy with this writing project. In the process, your youngster will practice writing with a specific audience in mind.

Ask him to consider what his friend might enjoy reading and then fill a gift bag with short items geared toward the person's taste. Maybe his friend likes funny jokes or is into spiders. Your child might write a few knock-knock jokes or make up a silly poem about spiders. *Idea:* He can look up and

add facts that would interest his pal ("There are 40,000 different species of spiders"). When he finishes the bag of writing, let him decorate and deliver it.



**WRITING FROM THE HEART**

Many children enjoy the inspirational tales and life lessons in the Chicken Soup for the Soul series. Have your youngster read a few of the stories and then write her own.

She can start by thinking of someone who has inspired her (perhaps her grandmother worked hard to support her family) or of a difficult time she went through herself (moving to a new state and having to make all new friends). Encourage her to think about what she learned from the person or experience. Then, she can write a first-person story about it. She might even decide to share her story with someone who has had a similar experience.

**(SUPER)HERO SANDWICHES**

Your child can practice writing instructions by inventing a new sandwich. First, show him a cookbook so he'll see how



recipes are written—usually with a list of ingredients and step-by-step instructions.

Then, suggest that he get an index card and write a recipe for a sandwich that his favorite TV or comic book character would like. His ingredients can be silly or realistic. For instance, a man of steel might eat nails or spinach on toast. After he writes instructions for putting together the sandwich, have him use them to draw a picture of his sandwich or to make the real thing—he'll be able to tell if he included every step.

**PHOTO ESSAYS**

Combining digital photos with a fun activity is a great way to encourage your youngster to write nonfiction.

The next time he goes fishing, bowling, or hiking, let him take pictures. During a hike, he could snap photos of wildlife, flowers, scenic views, and the people he's with. Afterward, have him put the photos into a computer document and type captions underneath. For example, if he's writing about a fishing trip, he might say, "The worms were crawling all over each other when I pulled one out for bait." He can email copies to the friends he fished with and print out a copy to keep.

