



Implementing Journaling in the Home

Journal writing is an important step in helping children develop strong written communication skills. It encourages creativity and allows children the freedom to express themselves, thus boosting self-confidence, self-awareness, and self-esteem. Below, and on the following pages, you will find information on the stages of emergent writing, as well as examples of journal pages you can print for your child.

Emergent writing is the term used to describe the stages of early writing abilities that children pass through as they discover more and more about making meaning through print. Journals are a wonderful tool to support and encourage children's early explorations in writing. When children begin to understand that their thoughts and feelings can be represented on paper, emergent writing is happening. It occurs when children first explore making marks on paper for a purpose other than drawing.

Emergent Writing IS:	Emergent Writing IS NOT:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Scribbling✓ A mixture of drawing and written words✓ Symbols such as sticks and circles✓ Real letters that do not represent words	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Tracing letters✓ Handwriting practice✓ Practicing one's name over and over again✓ Making letters only with a pencil on lined paper

Instead of choosing a topic for your child to write about, encourage their self-expression and creativity by allowing them to write what is meaningful to them. Ask open-ended questions and reflect back to children what you see in their pictures. Avoid using journaling as a time to teach skills.

Try This:	Avoid This:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ What would you like to tell me today?✓ That picture reminds me of what happened the other day when you fell and hurt your knee.✓ I see you built a castle with Legos. Do you want to write a story about it?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ How should you hold your pencil?✓ Today we are going to write about the weather. What does it look like outside?✓ How does a B look?

Invite your child to journal, but allow them to make the decision. Put your child's journaling supplies in the Writing Center prop box (see *Creating Centers in Your Home*). When your child completes an entry in their journal, encourage them to share their picture and writing with you. If they ask for help writing or spelling, you can provide assistance, but avoid instruction. The goal is to support their creativity. For more guidance, see *Exploring the Stages of Writing* on the next page.

Exploring the Stages

PRE-SCHOOL



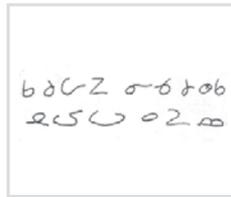
Children make marks on the page that seem random but are clearly not a drawing.

A child proudly declares, "This is Daddy!" or "This is my name!" Children may make these marks in and around a drawing, so you could see a mixture of both. In any case, at this stage children are using "writing" to represent ideas, feelings, and experiences.



Children produce long lines of wavy scribble as if to imitate adult cursive writing.

This may fill up a page in a child's journal and is a powerful indication that they understand that writing conveys a lot of information. This is often called "pretend writing." It is a way for children to feel confident and fluent in their ability to express themselves. If you ask the children to tell you what they wrote, be prepared for a long story!



Children purposefully make the basics of English language letter shapes—sticks and circles.

This shows that children at this stage know words are made up of separate and identifiable letters. While the letters may not be recognizable, a child may say, "This is an A and this is a K like my name." Or a child may point to a few of the mock letters and say, "This says dog."



Children begin to make conventional letters that are recognizable. They may put letters together to make "words."

When children make conventional letters, they are most often letters in their own names or in words like "Mama" and "Daddy." But they will also create strings of letters going across the page. At this stage, you want to be sure there is plenty of environmental print and lots of reference tools, like alphabet cards and strips, children's dictionaries, etc.



Children write words that may have some or little relation to conventional spelling. They may put spaces in between "words" to make word clusters.

This is the stage when you begin to ask children the sounds they hear in the words they say and what letters might make those sounds. It is also important to have them tell you what they wrote. But don't be surprised if they ask *you* to tell them what they wrote!



Children write words that have more and more relation to conventional spelling. They may string "words" together to make a sentence that represents a thought, idea, or experience.

As children grow in confidence and in the ability to understand letter-sound correspondence, their inventive spellings become easier to read and understand on their own. You will see how they are relating isolated sounds to words and combining words in sentences.

PRE-K

Blank writing area with four sets of horizontal lines. Each set consists of a solid top line, a dashed middle line, and a solid bottom line.