

READERS ARE WRITERS!

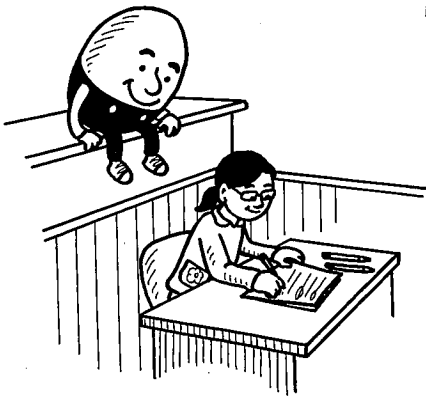
In books, your youngster will find people and animals, real and imaginary places, fascinating facts, and interesting words that can inspire him when he writes. Here are activities to help him make connections between reading and writing.



FAMILY PICKS

This cute display encourages your child to write opinions of the books he reads. Once a week, let each family member choose a favorite book to display on a bookcase or shelf—like “staff picks” in a library or bookstore.

When your youngster selects a book to display, help him write what he liked about it. If he’s not writing yet, he could dictate his words to you. (Example: “I was happy that the little boy learned not to be scared of monsters anymore.”) Put out his review along with the book. Family members can read each other’s opinions and discover new books to enjoy.



NURSERY RHYMES

Just as your child is part of a family, words come in families, too. Explain that a word family is made up of words that end with the same combination of letters—so they’re fun to use in nursery rhymes.

Read nursery rhymes in library books or online, and let your youngster look for word families. She could pick a verse to write on a piece of paper and then underline or circle words that share an ending. Example: “Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall / Humpty Dumpty had a great fall.” Underneath, have her list other words in the same word family (*ball, call, hall*).

STORY MOBILE

“First this happened, and then that happened!” Give your child practice with putting story events in order with this activity.

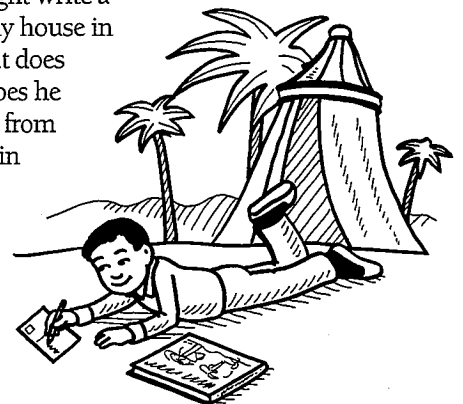
Read a story, and have her decorate an index card for each event. For *The Little Red Hen*, she could make cards showing the hen planting seeds, watering seeds, cutting wheat, grinding wheat into flour, making flour into dough, and baking bread. Help your youngster write about each event on one side of a card, and let her illustrate it on the other side.

Then, she can hole-punch the top of each card, thread yarn through, and string the cards in order on a coat hanger. Finally, ask her to use her mobile to retell the story.

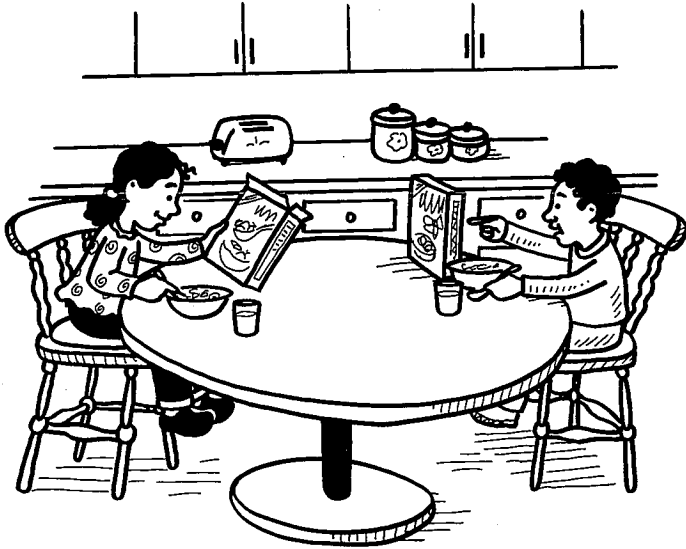
PICTURE POSTCARD

Let your child take an imaginary trip to a story setting. Read a book together, and suggest that he send you a postcard from a character in a place that’s mentioned. Imagining himself inside the book can help him relate to the characters and better understand the story.

For example, he might write a postcard from the candy house in *Hansel and Gretel*. What does Hansel see, and how does he feel? Or he could write from Max’s imaginary forest in *Where the Wild Things Are* by Maurice Sendak. Your youngster will practice reading for details as he decides what to write.



continued



CEREAL BOXES

Put reading and writing on the breakfast menu with this idea. Give your child a few cereal boxes to read while she's eating. What kind of information does she notice? She will find the cereal name and maybe a catchy slogan on the front. The back may have a recipe, tips for healthy eating, or a short biography of an athlete.

Encourage your youngster to cover an empty cereal box with construction paper and write and draw on it. She might make up a slogan and her own recipe or tips. ("Try this cereal on top of your yogurt or ice cream!")

PET INSTRUCTIONS

If your child could have any animal on the planet as a pet, which one would he choose? Read nonfiction books about animals with him. Then, ask him to pick a "pet" and write instructions for taking care of it.

He can use facts he learned from the books and write directions about how to feed and care for his pet. For a platypus, he might write, "Feed him insects and worms for breakfast. He likes to swim, so let him play in the bathtub."



WHAT AUTHORS DO

Authors can be great "teachers" for young writers. Here are some things your youngster might listen for when you read to her.

● **SETUP.** What is the *plot structure*, or setup, of the story? It may have a repeating phrase like "Brown bear, brown bear, what do you see?" in *Brown Bear, Brown Bear* by Bill Martin Jr. Or it might be told in a *circular plot*—in *If You Give a Mouse a Cookie* by Laura Numeroff, each event leads to the next until the story comes full circle. Or the story could simply be told from beginning to end. Ask your child to identify the plot structure and write a story like that.

● **WORD CHOICE.** Where could your youngster find interesting words to use in her writing? In books! Suggest that she jot down words she likes on slips of paper and put them in

a zipper bag. In *Stellaluna* (Janell Cannon), she may pick *mango*, *swooped*, and *leafy*, for example. When she writes stories, she can dump out her bag and look for fun words to include.

● **POINT OF VIEW.** Talk about who is telling the story. The main character might say "I"—that's *first-person* point of view. If the author uses *he* and *she*, the story is told in the *third person*. Try changing the point of view. For instance, if it says, "Edward knows that people walk their dogs, but he wonders why he never saw anyone walking a cat," you would say, "I know that people walk their dogs, but I wonder why I never saw anyone walking a cat." Which way does your child want to write her next story?

