

Your SeeSaw Reader Now

Grades K-1

February 2004

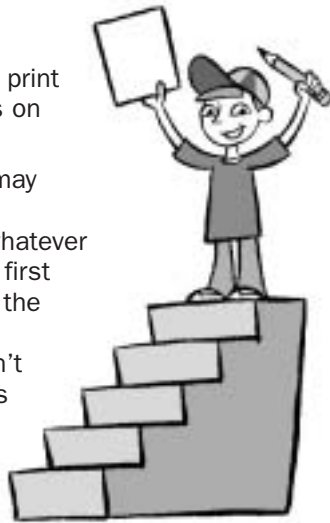
Steps to Writing Success

At this stage, your child is learning not just how to print letters and words but also how to put his thoughts on paper. The focus for emerging writers is to:

1) Write with invented spelling. Your child may already be writing his own book using invented (or temporary) spelling. This technique lets him use whatever part of a word he can — sometimes even just the first letter — to stand for a word. Later, he may “read” the piece to his teacher so she can rewrite words correctly. When your child brings home stories, don’t focus on misspelling. Instead praise the effort he’s made to use words to get his idea across.

2) Fine-tune spelling skills. Seeing a phrase such as “I ride a bike” written as “I r bk” may leave you with doubts about invented spelling. But in time you’ll see the number of mistakes decrease as the teacher works with your child on spelling skills — weekly word lists, memorization, and reading instruction that focuses on repeating key words. The best way to help him improve spelling is to read with him and point out written words all around you (“stop” on a traffic sign, “soup” on a can, etc.).

3) Think deeply about an idea. Spelling and word usage is separated from creative writing so that your child will not be restricted by the limited number of words he can spell. Instead of a simple story about a “bad dog” (because he knows those words), let your child write a deeper story about a “ferocious beast.” The goal is to have him see the connection between thinking about something and writing it down. This helps him feel confident that he can write. In the long run, it’s better for an emerging writer to misspell a complex word now rather than limit creativity and self-expression.



Did You Know?

About one billion Valentine’s Day cards are sent by mail each year! Have your child write a card to a valentine!

Ask an Expert

My 6 year old writes creative stories, but her letters are sloppy. How can I help her?

It’s great that your child is able to communicate ideas in writing. Her sloppy penmanship may be due to the type of writing instrument and paper she uses. By first grade, children usually develop the small-muscle control needed to manipulate a regular-sized pencil. If you’ve noticed other problems with her fine-motor skills (using utensils or a toothbrush) talk to her teacher about working on this skill. In the meantime, ask if your child can use a thicker pencil and larger paper. You can also try letting her use a computer for her the first drafts and have her copy the final paper by hand.

Meet Our Expert: Susan E. Canizares is the author of numerous nonfiction books for children and articles for parents and teachers. She received her MA in special education (early childhood) from New York University and earned her Ph.D. in language and literacy development at Fordham University.

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Daily Reading Fun

Inspire your writer with a story about characters who write! Read *Dear Mrs. LaRue: Letters from Obedience School* by Mark Teague.



Beyond Books

Hit with snow this winter? Write in the white! Fill squirt and spray bottles with a water/food-coloring mix. Mark off a smooth snowy surface and let your child practice writing words or messages to the planes and birds above!



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3 Ways to Encourage Writing Skills

Here are some quick ways to make writing a part of your child's daily life.

1 — Turn on the computer.

Open a word document and help your child use the keyboard to write a simple message or story. This helps him learn that the PC isn't just for games — it's a writer's best tool. Next, have him e-mail a message to a relative or friend who will be able to respond.

2 — Set up a family mail station.

Put each person's name on a large manila envelope, and tape them to the inside door of a hall closet. Write messages to each other during the week and drop them in — notes of encouragement, reminders, jokes, and of course, Valentine's Day cards!

3 — Keep a daily journal.

Take several sheets of paper, staple them together and let your child decorate the cover. Each day, have him make one entry related to something he did. This is a good way to encourage writing about different subjects (math, science, social studies). Some topics ideas:

- How I helped plant a seed
- What I ate today
- About the book we read in school
- Today's weather

Write your own Adventure!

Where did you go today? The park, museum, ball game, zoo, mall? Turn every trip into a story using the adventurer's notebook below. Fill in the blanks to get started. Then build on each point with more details.

Parent note: Offer guidance by asking open-ended questions to help your child flesh out the story details: Whom did we see? What did that remind you of? Then what happened?



I went to _____ with _____.

I saw _____.

First we _____.

The best part was _____.

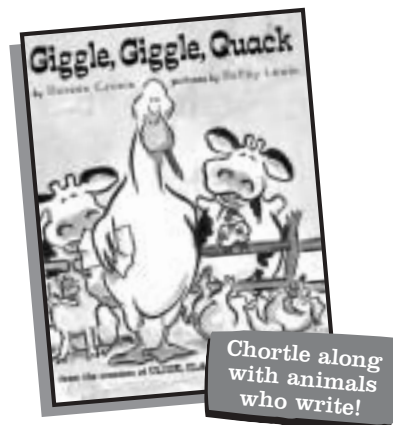
I learned _____.

Next time I want to _____.

Editors' Pick of the Month

Available in your SeeSaw March Book Club flyer.

Giggle, Giggle, Quack by Doreen Cronin



Who it is for: Humor-loving beginning readers in search of lively lap reads

Why we chose it: This follow up to *Click, Clack, Moo: Cows that Type* goes even further to prove the power of literacy.

Parents say: "My daughter loves how the animals best the humans and the humor keeps us both laughing out loud."

Kids say: "If I could be anyone in a book, I'd want to be Duck!"

More humor-filled tales to spark the imagination:

- *Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs* by Judi Barrett
- *Junie B., First Grader: One Man Band* by Barbara Park
- *King Bidgood's in the Bathtub* by Audrey Wood

About Your SeeSaw Reader Now

Your SeeSaw Reader Now is produced by the Family Channel editorial staff at Scholastic.com. For information on how to foster reading at home, age-appropriate booklists, and more, visit All About Reading. Go to: www.scholastic.com/read.