

MY
STORY

Let the Creative Sparks Fly

A Parent's
Guide
To Inspiring
Young
Writers



WACKY WRITING
PROMPTS

SEND THE WRITE
MESSAGE

WORD FOR WORD -
FUN VOCABULARY
BUILDERS

www.bicworld.com

Picasso said it, you know it, your kids know it...even if they don't always show it: all kids are artists. From their earliest infant days, children learn through creative play, and "art" is nothing more than the grown-up word for playing with color, form, sound, movement, or words. Stories are art, too, which is why BIC's "My Story" program encourages creativity with words. With a simple pen and paper, the world of ideas and imagination can open up for children.

All of us have stories to share, and BIC wants all kids (and parents!) to enjoy writing them. We hope these ideas might help you nurture your young Dickens or Dickinson. Creative expression helps with academic success and enlivens our world. Let it enliven your home as well and inspire your kids to share their stories!

*ABOUT THE AUTHOR:
STEPHANIE HUNT IS A SOUTH CAROLINA WRITER AND EDITOR WHO HAPPENS TO LOVE PLAYING WITH WORDS. A MOTHER OF THREE GIRLS, SHE ENJOYS NURTURING THEIR CREATIVE SIDE, AND DABBLES IN POETRY HERSELF WHEN NOT WRITING FOR REGIONAL AND NATIONAL MAGAZINES.*

Amuse the Muse

Running low on inspiration? Even the most famous authors experience writer's block. If your story well runs dry, try these impromptu exercises intended only to make writing fun, not to produce polished essays or poems (though if you do, that's great). Encourage your child to keep a "jump-start journal" at home to keep track of their wacky journal entries.

- Use old family photos as writing prompts. Have your child imagine what their daily life was like, what things smelled like in their home, tasted like in their kitchen, etc.
- Paint Chip Inspiration — Drop by any paint section at your local hardware or paint store, and pick up a handful of paint chips. Write a story (or poem) using some or all of the wonderfully imaginative paintcolor names.
- Recipe for a Story — Hungry for inspiration? Look no further than your cookbook shelf; choose a recipe and either incorporate the food, an interesting ingredient, or the activity of cooking it into a story, the sillier the better. (e.g. A coconut cake? What kind of celebration? Who baked it and why? What happens after eating it?)



TO BE
OR NOT
TO BE...

William Shakespeare

One
small step
for man...

Neil Armstrong

I have
a dream...

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Say What?!

Encourage kids to think of writing as an easy, comfortable thing--like having a casual conversation with a friend. Writing dialogue is a terrific exercise for any author, whether a beginner or a Pulitzer Prize winner, and it can help children realize that words can come naturally! Try these fun ideas for getting quippy:

- Bubble Trouble — Use sticky notes to cut out circles to stick on funny family photos, magazine pictures, or newspaper articles, and ask your child to fill the "bubbles" with what they imagine the people might be thinking or saying.
- Caption Action — Cut out cartoons from the the comics (or magazines like *The New Yorker*) leaving off the caption, then challenge your child to make up his or her own version. This is also fun with magazine photos and pictures from grocery store tabloids.
- Quote Catcher — Designate a small bulletin board (with a stack of index cards) or dry erase board in a central area of your home and encourage all family members to post their favorite quotes. The quotes might be inspiring, humorous, or themed, and the simple exercise of writing another's words teaches kids how well-written words flow. To get started, check out lists of famous quotes at www.brainyquote.com or www.quotegarden.com.

Be a Writing Role Model

Remember, your children are watching you. You already know that readers beget readers, and the same holds true for writing. Children who observe their parents using the written word become more comfortable writers themselves. Here are some tips for sending the "write" message:

- Share your story, or better yet, write it! Encourage your children to interview you, asking about your childhood, your dreams, your fears, your funny or embarrassing experiences. Write an informal family history, even if just in a spiral-bound notebook. Get grandparents to contribute as much as possible.
- Write your child notes and hide them in lunch boxes, under pillows, or in the bathroom drawer. Ask them questions so they will write you back.
- Keep a journal, and let your child see you writing in it.
- Encourage written thank-you notes, and let your child see you write them as well.
- Use a dictionary and keep several handy around the house.
- Be encouraging, not critical, of your child's written work.
- Limit television and computer use as much as possible. Listen to books on tape when driving so children can begin to hear well-written language.



Word Surge

Research indicates that the number of different words a child is exposed to in the early years is a key predictor of future reading and academic success.* Whether your child has just mastered the ABCs or is preparing for the SAT, try these ideas for expanding your family's word wealth:

- **Word of the Weekend** – Those "Word of the Day" calendars are a great idea, but let's face it, it's hard to keep up to date peeling off all those pages. Instead, designate a "Word of the Weekend," post it on the fridge, and challenge each other to "slip it in" to casual conversation during weekend activities. The first person to do so gets to pick the following weekend's word.
- **Play Word Games** – The classic ways to become word savvy, like playing Scrabble and doing crossword puzzles, are still fun and effective. Add them to your family's repertoire.
- **Vocabulary Vertigo** – Write your child's weekly vocabulary words (or make up themed lists of your own) on large index cards in bright, colorful letters, and tape them to the ceiling over his or her bed. Decorate them with stars and expand your child's linguistic galaxy!
- **Ransom Letters** – Have your child cut up old magazines or newspapers, choosing words or letters with big, fun fonts, and paste them together, creating words or stories or phrases with eye-catching appeal.

(*supporting research: <http://www.edletter.org/past/issues/1997-ja/language.shtml>)

OTHER RESOURCES:

Here are a few fun sites for writers of all stripes:

Mad-libs: http://pbskids.org/itsmylife/body/solosports/create_story.html

Create a play: <http://www.kids-space.org/HPT/1a/11a.html>

Story prompts: <http://www.thestorystarter.com/>

Magnetic poetry: <http://www.magneticpoetry.com/kidspetry/playonline.cfm>

Word of the day: <http://wordcentral.com/dailybuzzword.html>

Online dictionary/thesaurus, word games, etc.: <http://dictionary.reference.com/>

