

The Power of the Pen: Let Children Choose Writing Centers!



"Y-E-S. N-O. L-O-V-E. H-E-L-P." When children see the power of written words, they want to write, too. A "writing center" gives children easy access to writing materials and lets them enjoy a variety of activities while they learn skills that will help them become confident, competent writers—and meet language arts benchmarks.

What are the basics of making a writing center?

- A quiet space with seats for two or more at desks or a table
- Paper: unlined paper, clean scrap paper, outdated business stationery, lined paper
- Pencils, pens, crayons, chalk, erasers (NOTE: Some children work best with larger crayons or thick pencils. Others do better with thinner pencils or crayons.)
- An alphabet chart with capital and lowercase printed letters, plus numerals
- Print samples: greeting cards, calendars, newspapers, magazines, handwritten messages, coupons

What other materials might encourage children to visit the writing center?

- Clipboards: purchased or made from stiff cardboard and two paperclips
- Colored pencils and nontoxic markers
- Special papers: envelopes, colored paper, graph paper, postcards, index cards, appointment books, message pads, labels
- Office supplies: tape, paperclips, stapler, brads, hole punch, scissors
- Canceled postage stamps, promotional stamps
- Rubber stamps of letters and words, stamp pads
- Chalkboard, whiteboard, Magna-Doodle, Etch-A-Sketch (These tools save paper and allow children to easily erase "mistakes.")
- Magnetic letters or words; alphabet blocks; letters made of wood, sandpaper, or plastic
- Picture dictionary
- Storage for children's work (file folders, accordion files, binders)
- Places to display children's writing

When might a child use a writing center?

- When she selects writing as an activity during choice time
- When he wants to create signs, tickets, or other props for dramatic play
- When she wants to make a message for a friend or family member
- When using centers is part of the daily schedule

 For related Web resources, see "The Power of the Pen: Let Children Choose Writing Centers!" at <http://illinoisearlylearning.org/tips.htm>.



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