

Little Authors

Whether your child is just beginning to write his letters or has graduated to entire paragraphs, he can be an author! From a simple counting book to an information-packed travel guide, these projects will boost your youngster's writing skills—and his confidence in himself as a writer.



Counting book

Ask your child to find items in your house that come in numbers from 1 through 10. Perhaps you have 1 refrigerator, 2 TVs, 3 candles, and 4 kitchen chairs. Let him draw each set of items on a separate sheet of paper. Staple the pieces together into a book. Then, help him write a sentence on every page. *Example:* "We have 4 chairs for 4 people."

Fill-in-the-blank story

Your youngster can write her own version of a favorite book with this idea. Read the story aloud to her. Afterward, write sentences from the book on sheets of paper, leaving blanks for the characters' names and for places and objects mentioned. Ask her to fill in the blanks with new names, places, and things. She might use classmates' names, places she has visited, and items she likes. When she's finished, invite her to read her version to you. She'll see how much a story changes based on an author's choices.

Lift-the-flap riddles

Here's a clever way for your child to write riddles. Help him cut construction paper into quarters and staple the pieces together along one edge. He can make flaps by carefully cutting four smaller squares from another sheet of paper and gluing the top of each square onto a page. Next, have him write



a riddle on each flap and the answer underneath. He could get ideas by looking around the room, choosing an object, and thinking about what it does. *Example:* "I go up and down. When you look at me, you see outside. What am I?" (A window.)

My autobiography

Suggest that your youngster write about a familiar subject: herself. Give her one sheet of paper for every year of her life, and talk about what might go on each page. For instance, remind her how old she was when she started school, when her baby brother was born, or when you moved to a new home. She can draw a picture and write a sentence or paragraph about each event.

Publish it!

When your youngster completes a writing project, encourage her to share it using one of these ideas:

- Ask her to illustrate her story. Help her frame her picture and hang it on the wall.
- Add your child's writing to your family's book collection. She could hole-punch stories and put them in a binder or slip them into pages of a photo album. Let her display homemade books on top of a bookcase.
- Hold an "author celebration" when she finishes writing a story or book. Choose a special chair where she can sit and read it aloud to your family.
- Help your youngster type a story and email it to a relative or friend. Or she can write it on paper and mail it.





Coffee-table book

With this giant book, your child can save her artwork and practice writing captions. Ask her to select several drawings and paintings that she did in school. Cut a few pieces of poster board in half, and let her glue a picture on each half (leaving space for writing). Staple them together, and help your youngster write about each project on the space below it: “This is a sunset. I used red, yellow, and orange paint.”

Tall tale

Read several tall tales to your child. You can find these at the library or online. Explain that tall tales exaggerate something, often in a funny way. The story of Paul Bunyan, for instance, tells about an enormous lumberjack. Then, have your youngster think of something that would be funny to exaggerate. If he likes to sing, he might write about a boy who sings everything he wants to say instead of talking. Or maybe he loves the color blue. He could write a tall tale where everything is blue. *Idea:* Let him write his story on narrow pieces of paper and tape them together end-to-end. It will be a *tall* tall tale!

Travel brochure

What kinds of restaurants would be on Jupiter? Your youngster gets to decide when she writes her own travel guide to any spot in the universe. After she picks a place, help her fold a sheet of paper into thirds lengthwise. The front panel is the cover, where she can put a title (“Visit Jupiter!”) and draw a picture. Help her write headings for the next four sections: “What to see,” “What to do,” “Where to stay,” and “Where to eat.” On those panels, she can draw and label tourist attractions (“Big Red Spot Museum”), activities (“High-Bounce Trampolines”), lodging (“Helium Hotel”), and restaurants (“The Ice Box”). On the back cover, your child might add another illustration and a line encouraging people to visit (“Fly to Jupiter today!”).

3-D nature guide

This book made of zipper bags is a fun introduction to nonfiction writing. Go outside so your youngster can collect a few small objects from the ground (leaf, rock, pinecone,

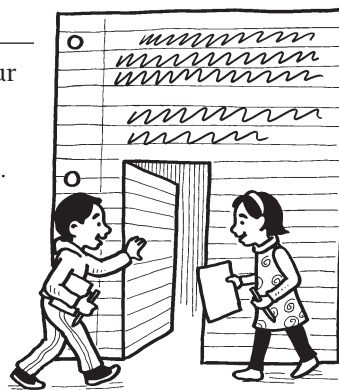


twig). Have him write about each one on a separate index card. *Example:* “This leaf was in our front yard. It is red and pointy.” Then, put each item into a separate bag along with its index card. He can write a title for his book on a card and put that inside another bag. Help him seal the bags and staple the left edges together.

Story starters

“What should I write about?” When your child asks this question, suggest that he think of interesting or funny first lines he could use. Here are ideas to get him started.

1. One day, I discovered a secret room in my house.
2. Polly was a polar bear who didn't like snow.
3. At noon, we were still waiting for the sun to come up.



4. “It's time for your flying lesson,” Mom said.
5. There were 10 seconds left in the big game.
6. I couldn't believe what I saw!
7. My new iguana is green.
8. The grocery store was dark and spooky.
9. “Class, we have a new student,” the teacher said.
10. It was the best day of the year.