

## Writing a Story

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What happened next?

Credit: Mr.Heisenberg/Shutterstock

### Background Information

Young children often think that they cannot be writers because they have not yet mastered printing letters or spelling words. However, they can be encouraged to understand that they can share their thoughts and ideas through pictures and drawings. Children need to see themselves as writers and inviting them to tell stories through their drawings or cut-out pictures fosters and develops their confidence as writers.

Children in kindergarten are at various stages in their writing development. Most children are at the emergent stage of writing. At this stage, children learn that they can record their oral language in print form. They learn that writing is a way to communicate ideas. They also learn that when something is written down, the message does not change. The written piece always says the same thing—in other words, the written message now has a kind of permanence.

Children will begin to “write” using pictures and, eventually, they may include some letters. They progress from scribble writing to representing words with one or more letters. These letters represent the dominant sounds they hear when they say each word aloud. For example, they might write the word “you” as “u” or the word “purple” as “prpl.” Over time, children will begin to use some frequently used words in their writing (e.g., my, am, Mom, to, and so on).

### Purpose

These activities will focus on children telling stories as well as writing stories by means of drawings while perhaps including some printed letters or words, too. They will learn that stories have a sequence consisting of a beginning, a middle, and an end. They will identify who is in a story they write and where it takes place. Then they will draw the three parts of their story. They may attempt to write parts of the story, or you may write the story as your child dictates it. For some children, taking a one-page drawing and transforming it into a three-part story will be a new creative task for them.

## Materials

- 3 pieces of paper stapled together to make a book or 3 pieces of paper taped together to form a sequence of three panels

## Activities

### Talk About a Story

1. Show children the story sequence featuring the paint cans above. Ask children to share their thinking about the photos. Ask questions such as, **What do you see in these two pictures?** (cans of paint with the lids off, a dog with paint all over it, messy splotches of paint all over the floor)
2. Next, have children think beyond what they see in the photos. Ask questions such as, **Look at the first picture of the paint cans and the paint brush. Why do you think the paint cans and the brush are there?** (Someone is going to paint the walls of a home using different colours. Someone is going to paint a mural. Someone is going to paint a playhouse in bright colours.) **Who do you think put the paint cans there?** (a painter who has been hired to do some painting, the dog's owners, an artist)
3. Then have children look at the second photo and ask, **Why do you think the dog was able to get into the paint?** (The dog's owners went to have lunch and they were careless and left the paint cans sitting open. The owners thought the dog was outside, but he sneaked into the room when they weren't looking.)
4. Point to the last box with no photo in it. Ask, **What do you think happened next in this story?** (The owners came in and saw the mess and they were upset. The owners came in and started laughing. The owners had to give the dog a bath and they had a hard time getting the paint off the dog.) Invite children to answer the question, **What picture would you draw here to show how this story ended?**
5. Ask, **What would be a good title for this story?** (Acceptable titles might be similar to "A Messy Dog" or "Doggie Gets in Trouble.")
6. Have children look at the photos again and tell their own story about the dog. Remind them that their story must have a beginning, a middle, and an end.
7. You may wish to tell your own story about the dog and the paint.

### Write an Original Story

1. You may wish to read children some simple stories and talk about what happened at the beginning of the story, during the middle of the story, and at the end of the story.
2. Brainstorm with children some ideas for their own story. Encourage them to focus on an experience they have had or a place they like to visit. Then have them expand their idea into three parts: a beginning, a middle, and an end. You might give them prompts such as, **What happened**

**first? What happened next? What happened last?** Ask them to share who is in their story and where it takes place. Here are some examples that demonstrate expanding an experience into a three-part story:

- *We buried my brother in sand at the beach. First, we covered my brother in sand so only his head was sticking out. Next, he jumped up and his whole body was covered in sand. Then he had to go swimming to get all the sand off his body.*
- *My little sister fell asleep eating spaghetti. First, my Mom made us all spaghetti for supper. Next, my little sister was very tired and she fell asleep and her face went right into her spaghetti! Then she woke up and started to cry because she had spaghetti everywhere, even in her hair.*

3. Provide each child with paper to draw their story. They can use three pieces of paper stapled together so it looks like a book, or you may use three pieces of paper taped together in a sequence that looks like this:

<b>Beginning</b>	<b>Middle</b>	<b>End</b>
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4. Children may include words or letters to accompany their picture, or they may choose to dictate the text of their story and you can transcribe it.
5. Encourage children to share their story with others either by reading it in person or by sharing it electronically with others. Ask them questions about their story, for example, **What was your favourite part of the story you wrote? How do you think [person's name] felt when that happened? What else does this story make you think about?**
6. Parents and caregivers may wish to start a mini-library of children's stories. Use a bin, a box such as a cereal box, or another appropriately sized box or container. Have your child collect all their stories in this space. Then have them reread their stories to themselves and to other members of their household. A parent or other family member may wish to play library, with the child acting as the librarian. People in the child's home can borrow books from the child's library, or the child can conduct story time and read their own books to others.