

# 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.*

## 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- Paper: unlined paper, clean scrap paper, outdated business stationery, lined paper, greeting cards, sticky notes
- 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, newsletters, 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, nontoxic markers, highlighters, bingo stampers
- 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, ink 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 (Consider adding a picture dictionary or two languages other than English if you have children in your classroom who speak another language.)
- Storage for children’s work (file folders, accordion files, binders, filing trays)
- Places to display children’s writing (bulletin boards, easels, walls, doors)

## When might a child use a writing center?

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

---

Any opinions, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this tip sheet are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Illinois State Board of Education.



Children’s Research Center  
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign  
51 Gerty Dr. • Champaign, IL 61820-7469  
Telephone: 217-333-1386  
Toll-free: 877-275-3227  
E-mail: [iel@illinois.edu](mailto:iel@illinois.edu)  
<https://illinoisearlylearning.org>



**Illinois**  
State Board of  
Education