

When to Take Dictation:

The best way to show children that print is useful is to incorporate it into their every day activities. When its used this way, dictation is a meaningful, not isolated experience.

1. • **Help children solve problems.** Ask children how they made a collage, designed a block structure, or figure out how to work a new puzzle. Then record their explanations and invite them to illustrate their words. Over time, show children how they can use their dictation's to remind them of past ideas and situations that can be helpful in new situations.
2. • **Encourage young authors.** Listen to the stories children invent during free play, at snack and meal time, and outdoors. Wait for a time when you won't be interrupting and offer to record their stories. You might write them on chart paper, put them on a few sheets in a book, or even type them.
3. • **Expand communication.** Talk with children about their paintings and drawings to help them further express thoughts and feelings. Maximize children's control over the experience by letting them decide where - and if - you will write words on their artwork.
4. • **Record observations.** Science activities provide natural opportunities for dictation. Write children's words on experience paper as they make observations, and discoveries. Hang the charts in your science area and refer to them as you continue your investigation.
5. • **Remember fun experiences.** Keep special feelings by writing down memories of a shared group experience such as a field trip or celebration. Invite a few children, one at a time to dictate their favorite things or events. Then gather together and read the dictations back.
6. • **Get organized.** To plan an event such as a trip to the grocery store or an indoor picnic, gather in a small group and make shopping and "to do" lists. Then use these lists to help you get ready and carry out your plans.