

# Spark a Story

Does your child resist putting pen to paper? Does she make up any excuse she can think of to avoid writing? With second graders, it's important to focus on ideas, rather than perfect grammar, in order to get them motivated. Instead of the *mechanics* of writing, concentrate on the ideas that make writing sing. This activity will help jump-start your child's creative juices...without the moans and groans!



## What You Need:

- Index cards
- Magazines
- Scissors
- Glue stick
- Pencils
- Paper

## What to Do:

1. Pull out some old magazines and help your child look through them for interesting pictures. Look for pictures that provide strong visuals of characters and settings. Or, pull out pictures that catch the eye, or make you want to learn more about the story behind them.
2. Ask your child to clip the selected pictures out of the magazines and glue them onto index cards (one picture to a card).
3. On the back side of each card, write some question prompts, such as:
  - What's happening in the scene?
  - Where is this scene taking place? Use describing words.
  - Who are the characters? Feel free to make up names!
  - When is this happening? Time of day, year, century...
  - Why are the characters doing what they're doing?
  - How will the characters finish what they're doing?
4. Look through the cards with your child and brainstorm some ideas together. Be sure to include adjectives that describe the character(s) and setting. Write your brainstorms down on a piece of paper.
5. Children benefit from watching, so parents, take the lead! Select one card and begin writing a story, referring to the question prompts on the back of the card and using descriptive words. (By modeling the procedure first, your child will be more likely to try it herself.)
6. Read your story out loud. Have your child listen to see whether you answered any of the questions and used descriptive words.
7. Now it's your child's turn. Have her select a card and begin writing a story about the picture. Remind her that her ideas are more important than spelling and grammar. This will allow your child to write freely, without worrying about perfection. When she's finished, ask her to read her story to you.

**Variations:** Use old family photographs instead of magazine pictures. Have your child start the story and you finish it, or vice versa.