

Learning to Write

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- LAST MODIFIED: 30 August 2016
- DOI: [10.1093/obo/9780199791231-0175](https://doi.org/10.1093/obo/9780199791231-0175)

Introduction

Learning to write, at both the levels of single words and sentences, is an important objective of literacy instruction. Although more research has examined reading development than writing development, experts are gaining an increased knowledge of the development of spelling and composition. Children in literate societies start to learn about characteristics of their writing system long before they receive formal schooling. Young children's early attempts at writing and their responses in other tasks often reveal some knowledge about the appearance of writing. As literacy instruction begins, children's increasing appreciation of the relation between print and speech helps facilitate their spelling acquisition. Spelling is a challenging task, serving as a crucial foundation for higher-order writing, or composing. In making decisions about how to spell words, children use different sources of information, including phonological, morphological, and graphotactic (i.e., information about the arrangement and order of letters) patterns. Building on lower-level skills such as spelling and letter production, children develop composing skills and strategies to communicate ideas in writing. Cognitive factors, including working memory, are thought to constrain the development of composing skill. Research on special populations, such as children with language impairments or hearing loss, has been useful for revealing the processes underlying spelling and writing development. This research, as well as research with typically developing children, can help inform educational practice.

General Overviews

The edited volume by [Beard, et al. 2009](#) provides a comprehensive overview of writing development. [Treiman and Kessler 2014](#) review how children learn about different aspects of their writing system and discuss the findings in relation to theories of literacy development. Providing a cross-linguistic perspective, [Perfetti, et al. 1997](#) reviews research and theories of spelling acquisition in children who speak different languages.

- Beard, Roger, Debra Myhill, Jeni Riley, and Martin Nystrand, eds. *The SAGE Handbook of Writing Development*. London: SAGE, 2009.

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The chapters in this edited volume cover a wide range of topics related to the development of writing, from spelling and punctuation to composition. The populations discussed range from preschool children to college students.

Find this resource:

- Perfetti, Charles A., Laurence Rieben, and Michel Fayol, eds. *Learning to Spell: Research, Theory, and Practice across Languages*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, 1997.

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A selection of chapters from researchers studying spelling in different languages from the perspectives of cognitive psychology and psycholinguistics. Chapters cover the acquisition of spelling, the relations between reading and spelling, and related topics.

Find this resource:

- Treiman, Rebecca, and Brett Kessler. *How Children Learn to Write Words*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2014.

DOI: [10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199907977.001.0001](https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199907977.001.0001)[Save Citation »Export Citation »E-mail Citation »](#)

A well-structured book on children's learning of their writing system. Reviews and discusses how children learn about different aspects of writing including graphic forms, letter names, and complex spelling patterns. Theoretical and educational implications are discussed throughout the chapters.

Find this resource:

Journals

Several journals present up-to-date research findings concerned with children's writing. [Writing Systems Research](#) focuses on the linguistic analysis and learning of different writing systems. [Reading and Writing: An Interdisciplinary Journal](#) presents empirical studies on how children learn to read and write. Emphasizing the social and cultural contexts of writing development, [Written Language and Literacy](#) is concerned with the acquisition of writing and other literacy skills. [Journal of Writing Research](#) presents evidence of adults' and children's learning of different aspects of writing and written composition, serving as a useful resource for both researchers and educators.

- [Journal of Writing Research](#).

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Reports research on different aspects of writing or written composition. Topics range from developmental aspects of writing, to social and cultural perspectives on writing, to the role of writing in academic achievement.

Find this resource:

- *Reading and Writing: An Interdisciplinary Journal*. 1989–.

[Save Citation](#) » [Export Citation](#) » [E-mail Citation](#) »

Publishes research on the processes and acquisition of reading and writing. Contributions come from psychologists and psycholinguists and from researchers in such fields as neuropsychology and education. Articles available [online](#) by subscription.

Find this resource:

- *Writing Systems Research*. 2009–.

[Save Citation](#) » [Export Citation](#) » [E-mail Citation](#) »

Articles in this journal are concerned with the analysis, use, and learning of writing systems. Taking a cross-linguistic approach, scientific work related to a variety of writing systems is reported. Articles available [online](#) by subscription.

Find this resource:

- *Written Language and Literacy*. 1998–.

[Save Citation](#) » [Export Citation](#) » [E-mail Citation](#) »

Publishes research that examines written language processing and literacy development from linguistic, educational, and sociolinguistic perspectives. Covers topics such as literacy and technology and the relation between literacy and socioeconomic factors. Articles available [online](#) by subscription.

Find this resource:

Background on Writing Systems

An understanding of the way in which writing systems work and the similarities and differences among them provides an important foundation for understanding how children learn to use these systems. [Rogers 2005](#) covers a range of writing systems, discussing the structure of each and its relation to the spoken language. Focusing on American English, [Cummings 1988](#) describes features of the English spelling system and spelling patterns related to different levels of the language.

- Cummings, Donald W. *American English Spelling: An Informal Description*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988.

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Cummings provides a detailed description of the spelling system of American English, the writing system featured in many studies of children's writing. Cummings discusses how the spelling of English reflects not only phonology but also morphology and etymology.

Find this resource:

- Rogers, Henry. *Writing Systems: A Linguistic Approach*. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2005.

[Save Citation](#) » [Export Citation](#) » [E-mail Citation](#) »

This well-written and comprehensive textbook provides an overview of writing systems from a linguistic perspective. Discusses the historical context and features of a number of types of writing systems.

Find this resource:

Young Children's Knowledge about Writing

From an early age, children in literate societies are surrounded by print. Research has shown that children learn about a number of aspects of writing long before they are taught formally how to read and write. In their pioneering work, [Ferreiro and Teberosky 1982](#) explores young children's knowledge of writing by interpreting a group of Spanish-speaking children's writing productions and responses in interviews. Ferreiro and Teberosky propose a developmental theory that focuses on how children construct their own ideas about writing. [Tolchinsky 2003](#) expands Ferreiro and Teberosky's views by reviewing more recent evidence on children's early knowledge about writing. [Lavine 1977](#) presents one of the earliest experimental studies demonstrating young children's understanding of one aspect of writing—its graphic properties. [Pollo, et al. 2009](#) analyzes the patterns in novice writers' productions, revealing their tendency to reproduce letter patterns to which they are frequently exposed. Another aspect of writing, which is the focus of a study by [Lundberg and Tornéus 1978](#), pertains to the relation between print and speech. Their results point to young children's difficulties in understanding the symbolic nature of writing. [Rowe 2008](#) provides a social perspective on learning about writing, examining how print-related conventions can be communicated between adults and young learners during writing activities. Motivated to help teachers better understand children's writing behavior, [Clay 1975](#) documents and analyzes young children's early writing.

- Clay, Marie. *What Did I Write? Beginning Writing Behaviour*. London: Heinemann Educational, 1975.

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Drawing on her analysis of young children's creative writing, Clay describes the development of children's understanding of a range of print conventions. A large number of examples of early writing are included. The book has direct implications for guiding children's writing behavior.

Find this resource:

- Ferreiro, Emilia, and Ana Teberosky. *Literacy before Schooling*. Exeter, NH: Heinemann Educational, 1982.

[Save Citation »Export Citation »E-mail Citation »](#)

Documents pioneering work on Argentinean Spanish-speaking children's understanding of writing before they receive formal instruction. Adopting a Piagetian approach, Ferreiro and Teberosky propose that children go through stages of literacy development, holding different hypotheses about writing at different stages. Particularly influential among researchers and educators in many Latin American countries.

Find this resource:

- Lavine, Linda O. "Differentiation of Letterlike Forms in Prereading Children." *Developmental Psychology* 13 (1977): 89–94.

DOI: [10.1037//0012-1649.13.2.89](https://doi.org/10.1037//0012-1649.13.2.89)[Save Citation »Export Citation »E-mail Citation »](#)

Presents experimental evidence on young children's knowledge of the graphic forms of writing. Even young children show sensitivity to graphic properties such as linearity and variability of written units. Results are consistent with the view that children's differentiation of writing-like forms becomes increasingly specific.

Find this resource:

- Lundberg, Ingvar, and Margit Tornéus. "Nonreaders' Awareness of the Basic Relationship between Spoken and Written Words." *Journal of Experimental Child Psychology* 25 (1978): 404–412.

DOI: [10.1016/0022-0965\(78\)90064-4](https://doi.org/10.1016/0022-0965(78)90064-4)[Save Citation »Export Citation »E-mail Citation »](#)

Asks whether young children understand the correspondence between speech and print by examining nonreaders' recognition of words that vary in length and that denote objects of different sizes. Results suggest that young children use semantic, but not phonological, information to make judgments about words.

Find this resource:

- Pollo, Tatiana C., Brett Kessler, and Rebecca Treiman. "Statistical Patterns in Children's Early Writing." *Journal of Experimental Child Psychology* 104 (2009): 410–426.

DOI: [10.1016/j.jecp.2009.07.003](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jecp.2009.07.003)[Save Citation »Export Citation »E-mail Citation »](#)

Examines writing by English- and Portuguese-speaking children who do not yet produce phonologically motivated spellings. Results demonstrate that prephonological spellers produce certain patterns that are consistent with those of the particular writing system to which they are exposed. Results are discussed in a statistical learning perspective.

Find this resource:

- Rowe, Deborah W. “Social Contracts for Writing: Negotiating Shared Understandings about Text in the Preschool Years.” *Reading Research Quarterly* 43 (2008): 66–95.

DOI: [10.1598/RRQ.43.1.5](https://doi.org/10.1598/RRQ.43.1.5)[Save Citation »Export Citation »E-mail Citation »](#)

Examines young children’s knowledge of writing-related practices from a social perspective. During naturalistic writing activities, Rowe observes communication between teachers and children about such topics as the physical characteristics and representational nature of writing.

Find this resource:

- Tolchinsky, Liliana. *The Cradle of Culture and What Children Know about Writing and Numbers before Being Taught*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, 2003.

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Tolchinsky updates and expands on many of the ideas put forward by [Ferreiro and Teberosky 1982](#). She reviews evidence that children learn a good deal about writing (and numbers) before they are taught formally about it in school.

Find this resource:

Invented Spelling and Phonology

Phonological knowledge, or knowledge about the sound system of a language, is an important foundation for reading and spelling acquisition. One way to assess children’s phonological knowledge is to examine their invented spellings, which are creative spellings that deviate from conventional spellings. In his pioneering work, [Read 1971](#) analyzes the invented spellings of a group of precocious preschool children and reports that children implicitly classify English sounds using relevant sound features. [Treiman 1993](#) replicates and extends Read’s findings by systematically examining a large sample of invented spellings from first graders, uncovering and explaining a wide range of phenomena. [Shen and Bear 2000](#) extends the examination of invented spelling to a non-alphabetic script—Chinese—and finds convergent evidence that phonological influences, among other influences, are observed in Chinese children’s invented spellings. [Caravolas, et al. 2001](#) reports that early phoneme awareness (the ability to manipulate sounds) and letter-sound knowledge contribute to later spelling skills in English. The cross-linguistic study of [Caravolas, et al. 2005](#) further demonstrates the effects of phoneme awareness on literacy skills in two scripts with different characteristics. Focusing on a different level of sound units,

[Cardoso-Martins, et al. 2006](#) examines whether children use individual letters to represent syllables in words.

- Caravolas, Markéta, Charles Hulme, and Margaret J. Snowling. “The Foundations of Spelling Ability: Evidence from a 3-Year Longitudinal Study.” *Journal of Memory and Language* 45 (2001): 751–774.

DOI: [10.1006/jmla.2000.2785](#)[Save Citation »Export Citation »E-mail Citation »](#)

Examines the developmental influence of metalinguistic skills in early stages of reading and spelling development. Results show that phoneme awareness and letter-sound knowledge serve as a foundation for phonological spelling abilities, which, in turn, contribute to conventional spelling and reading acquisition.

Find this resource:

- Caravolas, Markéta, Jan Volín, and Charles Hulme. “Phoneme Awareness Is a Key Component of Alphabetic Literacy Skills in Consistent and Inconsistent Orthographies: Evidence from Czech and English Children.” *Journal of Experimental Child Psychology* 92 (2005): 107–139.

DOI: [10.1016/j.jecp.2005.04.003](#)[Save Citation »Export Citation »E-mail Citation »](#)

Provides a direct cross-linguistic comparison to assess the role of phoneme awareness in literacy acquisition. Phoneme awareness is found to predict children’s reading and spelling performance in both English and Czech. Results point to a universally important role of phoneme awareness in alphabetic systems.

Find this resource:

- Cardoso-Martins, Cláudia, Marcela F. Corrêa, Letícia S. Lemos, and Ricardo F. Napoleão. “Is There a Syllabic Stage in Spelling Development? Evidence from Portuguese-Speaking Children.” *Journal of Educational Psychology* 98 (2006): 628–641.

DOI: [10.1037/0022-0663.98.3.628](#)[Save Citation »Export Citation »E-mail Citation »](#)

Evaluates the idea proposed by [Ferreiro and Teberosky 1982](#) (cited under [Young Children’s Knowledge about Writing](#)) that children go through a stage in which spellings represent syllables by examining Portuguese-speaking children’s spellings longitudinally. Results suggest that syllabic spelling is not common and that, when it does occur, may result from children’s partial ability to represent phonemes.

Find this resource:

- Read, Charles. “Pre-School Children’s Knowledge of English Phonology.” *Harvard Educational Review* 41 (1971): 1–34.

DOI: [10.17763/haer.41.1.91367v0h80051573](https://doi.org/10.17763/haer.41.1.91367v0h80051573)[Save Citation »Export Citation »E-mail Citation »](#)

In his seminal work, Read analyzes invented spellings produced by preschool children. The invented spellings are found to reflect children's own organization of English sounds, which sometimes differs from the standard system. Results suggest that some children can make some links between speech and print without explicit instruction.

Find this resource:

- Shen, Helen H., and Donald R. Bear. "Development of Orthographic Skills in Chinese Children." *Reading and Writing: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 13 (2000): 197–236.

DOI: [10.1023/A:1026484207650](https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1026484207650)[Save Citation »Export Citation »E-mail Citation »](#)

Examines early spelling in Chinese children. Results show how children's spelling errors reflect their developing knowledge of the Chinese orthography. Specifically, as children become more advanced writers, their reliance on phonological information decreases and their use of graphic and semantic information increases.

Find this resource:

- Treiman, Rebecca. *Beginning to Spell*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1993.

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Systematically analyzes a large sample of invented spellings produced by US first graders. Reports detailed analyses that address a wide range of phenomena observed in children's invented spellings. Considers not only phonology but also other factors that influence children's spelling, such as graphotactic knowledge.

Find this resource:

Information Children Use for Spelling Other than Phonology

Writing systems include different types of complexities, and these are challenging for children. Children do not necessarily resort to rote memorization in order to learn about complex spellings, however. Instead, they gradually pick up the patterns in a writing system, sometimes through explicit teaching and in other cases implicitly, without direct instruction. [Nunes and Bryant 2009](#) reviews evidence on children's learning of context-dependent sound-letter mappings, vowel and consonant digraphs, and morphologically consistent spelling. [Lété, et al. 2008](#) investigates the influence of several psycholinguistic variables on French children's spelling accuracy and reports that children are sensitive to such variables as sound-letter consistency, or the extent to which words with similar pronunciations are spelled similarly.

Moreover, children who have completed several years of literacy instruction are able to use the context in which a sound occurs to help choose a spelling for it. [Deacon, et al. 2008](#) reviews findings on the use of graphotactic and morphological information by English- and French-speaking spellers and argue that children attend to statistical patterns to learn about graphotactic and morphological regularities. The last two articles in this section each examine children's understanding of graphotactic information. [Cassar and Treiman 1997](#) carefully studies children's knowledge about different types of double-letter spellings, suggesting relatively early learning of at least some patterns. [Hayes, et al. 2006](#) shows that children are able to use contextual information provided by neighboring vowel letters to help spell consonants.

- Cassar, Marie, and Rebecca Treiman. "The Beginnings of Orthographic Knowledge: Children's Knowledge of Double Letters in Words." *Journal of Educational Psychology* 89 (1997): 631–644.

DOI: [10.1037//0022-0663.89.4.631](https://doi.org/10.1037//0022-0663.89.4.631)[Save Citation »Export Citation »E-mail Citation »](#)

A well-designed study of children's knowledge about different aspects of consonant doubling and the way in which this knowledge develops. Results suggest that even children who do not produce conventional spellings understand some simple graphotactic patterns involving doublets. Findings demonstrate the importance of considering knowledge other than phonological abilities in studying early spelling.

Find this resource:

- Deacon, Hélène S., Nicole Conrad, and Sébastien Pacton. "A Statistical Learning Perspective on Children's Learning about Graphotactic and Morphological Regularities in Spelling." *Canadian Psychology* 49 (2008): 118–124.

DOI: [10.1037/0708-5591.49.2.118](https://doi.org/10.1037/0708-5591.49.2.118)[Save Citation »Export Citation »E-mail Citation »](#)

An in-depth review of the literature on English- and French-speaking children's use of graphotactic and morphological information in spelling. Evidence points to relatively early learning of these patterns. Authors put forward a statistical learning view that young spellers extract regularities by attending to the co-occurrence of patterns. Also published in the French edition, *Psychologie Canadienne*.

Find this resource:

- Hayes, Heather, Rebecca Treiman, and Brett Kessler. "Children Use Vowels to Help Them Spell Consonants." *Journal of Experimental Child Psychology* 94 (2006): 27–42.

DOI: [10.1016/j.jecp.2005.11.001](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jecp.2005.11.001)[Save Citation »Export Citation »E-mail Citation »](#)

Examines the influence of neighboring vowels in children's spellings of consonants. Young spellers are found to use contextual information provided by vowels to spell

consonants, and such vowel context is based on graphotactic patterns. The results are discussed in relation to theories of spelling development.

Find this resource:

- L  t  , Bernard, Ronald Peereman, and Michel Fayol. "Consistency and Word-Frequency Effects on Spelling among First- to Fifth-Grade French Children: A Regression-Based Study." *Journal of Memory and Language* 58 (2008): 952–977.

DOI: [10.1016/j.jml.2008.01.001](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jml.2008.01.001)[Save Citation »](#)[Export Citation »](#)[E-mail Citation »](#)

Examines, in a large-scale study, the influence of psycholinguistic variables on the spelling of French-speaking children of different grades. Results suggest that children are sensitive to properties of the lexicon including word frequency and contextual information in the neighboring sounds of words. Findings have important implications for theories of spelling.

Find this resource:

- Nunes, Terezinha, and Peter Bryant. *Children's Reading and Spelling: Beyond the First Steps*. Chichester, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009.

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Chapters in this book provide a detailed and critical analysis of how children learn about the more complex aspects of written language after acquiring basic phonological knowledge. Topics include children's knowledge of consonant and vowel digraphs, learning about conditional letter-sound mappings, and learning and teaching about morphemes.

Find this resource:

Letter Production

Examining letter production both on its own and in relation to writing development can shed light on the processes involved in learning to write. One difficulty that children encounter in learning to write letters is remembering their left-right orientation. Although some letters of the Latin alphabet have an appendage to the left (e.g., *J*), more letters have an appendage to the right (e.g., *F*). [Fischer and Tazouti 2012](#) analyzes letter reversal errors by typically developing children, seeking to explain why such errors occur. Other works explore possible effects of technology-mediated communication on letter production and writing acquisition. Adopting functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) techniques, [James and Engelhardt 2012](#) presents interesting evidence that having preschoolers write letters by hand activates brain regions involved in reading but having them type or trace the letters does not. [Cunningham and Stanovich 1990](#) examines the influence of different modes of letter production on spelling and further demonstrates the value of handwriting in learning. [Plester, et al. 2008](#) evaluates the view

commonly portrayed in the media that texting adversely affects literacy achievement and does not find support for this view.

- Cunningham, Anne E., and Keith E. Stanovich. "Early Spelling Acquisition: Writing Beats the Computer." *Journal of Educational Psychology* 82 (1990): 159–162.

DOI: [10.1037//0022-0663.82.1.159](https://doi.org/10.1037//0022-0663.82.1.159)[Save Citation »Export Citation »E-mail Citation »](#)

Manipulates the mode of spelling production in training studies and examines its influence on subsequent spelling performance. Children who learn to spell by writing by hand show better spelling than those who type or use letter tiles during training. Findings provide evidence for motor involvement in spelling acquisition.

Find this resource:

- Fischer, Jean-Paul, and Youssef Tazouti. "Unraveling the Mystery of Mirror Writing in Typically Developing Children." *Journal of Educational Psychology* 104 (2012): 193–205.

DOI: [10.1037/a0025735](https://doi.org/10.1037/a0025735)[Save Citation »Export Citation »E-mail Citation »](#)

Left-right letter reversals are often thought to be a sign of serious literacy problems. However, the results of this study demonstrate that these errors occur in typically developing children. Given their poor memory for letter orientation, children may implicitly use general patterns pertaining to left-right orientation and writing direction in the Latin alphabet.

Find this resource:

- James, Karin H., and Laura Engelhardt. "The Effects of Handwriting Experience on Functional Brain Development in Pre-Literate Children." *Trends in Neuroscience and Education* 1 (2012): 32–42.

DOI: [10.1016/j.tine.2012.08.001](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tine.2012.08.001)[Save Citation »Export Citation »E-mail Citation »](#)

Uses fMRI techniques to explore the effects of writing methods on letter perception in pre-literate children. Children's letter perception is found to recruit brain regions involved in reading after handwriting letters, but not after tracing or typing them. Results suggest the importance of learning to produce letter forms by hand.

Find this resource:

- Plester, Beverly, Clare Wood, and Victoria Bell. "Txt Msg n School Literacy: Does Texting and Knowledge of Text Abbreviations Adversely Affect Children's Literacy Attainment?" *Literacy* 42 (2008): 137–144.

DOI: [10.1111/j.1741-4369.2008.00489.x](https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-4369.2008.00489.x)[Save Citation »Export Citation »E-mail Citation »](#)

Investigates the relation between children's use of text language and literacy attainment. Although concerns are often expressed about an adverse influence of texting, the authors report that children's text language is not negatively associated with spelling and writing. Children are capable of switching between textisms and standard language use.

Find this resource:

Composing

Theoretical models and frameworks have been proposed to understand processes involved in composing. [MacArthur, et al. 2006](#) provides a comprehensive overview of the literature on this topic, examining writing development from cognitive and sociocultural perspectives. An influential cognitive model of skilled writing proposed by [Hayes and Flower 1980](#) has contributed to research on both skilled writing and writing development. Emphasizing the role of lower-level processes in children's composing, [Berninger and Swanson 1994](#) makes several modifications to the model of writing in [Hayes and Flower 1980](#). [Bereiter and Scardamalia 1987](#) offers additional insights into children's developing knowledge of composing and their strategies for doing so.

- Bereiter, Carl, and Marlene Scardamalia. *The Psychology of Written Composition*. Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum, 1987.

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Drawing on their systematic observations of children's writing, Bereiter and Scardamalia describe cognitive processes involved in composition. The authors distinguish between types of knowledge and strategies that children use to retrieve and present information in writing.

Find this resource:

- Berninger, Virginia W., and H. Lee Swanson. "Modifying Hayes and Flower's Model of Skilled Writing to Explain Beginning and Developing Writing." In *Advances in Cognition and Educational Practice*. Vol. 2, *Children's Writing: Toward a Process Theory of the Development of Skilled Writing*. Edited by Earl C. Butterfield and Jerry S. Carlson, 57–81. Greenwich, CT, and London: JAI, 1994.

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Drawing on studies of children's writing, the authors modify a model of skilled writing to account for writing acquisition. Specifically, they propose additional cognitive components related to lower-level processing in young writers. Developmental changes in cognitive processing of writing are also discussed.

Find this resource:

- Hayes, John R., and Linda S. Flower. “Identifying the Organization of Writing Processes.” In *Cognitive Processes in Writing*. Edited by Lee W. Gregg and Erwin R. Steinberg, 3–30. Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum, 1980.

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Proposes a model that has guided research on composition in both beginners and skilled writers. Based on analyses of writers’ oral reports during writing, Hayes and Flower specify the ways in which various cognitive and environmental factors are involved in skilled composing.

Find this resource:

- MacArthur, Charles A., Steve Graham, and Jill Fitzgerald, eds. *Handbook of Writing Research*. New York: Guilford, 2006.

[Save Citation](#) » [Export Citation](#) » [E-mail Citation](#) »

The chapters in this edited volume present a comprehensive summary of research on writing development, offering views and analyses from cognitive and sociocultural perspectives. Findings about the effectiveness of different instructional approaches are also discussed.

Find this resource:

Grammar, Punctuation, and Word Segmentation

Modern writing systems typically include punctuation, and, in many systems, words are separated in print systematically. Children must learn about these aspects of writing in order to become skilled writers. As an effort to redress the relative dearth of research on punctuation acquisition, [Hall and Robinson 1996](#) assembles research on different aspects of punctuation learning. [Correa and Dockrell 2007](#) reveals relations between young writers’ ability to use correct spacing between words and other literacy knowledge, such as vocabulary, reading, and spelling. In some languages, including French, certain aspects of grammar are marked in writing but are not audible in speech. [Fayol, et al. 1999](#) devises an interesting experimental paradigm to investigate such phenomena in the area of verb–subject agreement.

- Correa, Jane, and Julie E. Dockrell. “Unconventional Word Segmentation in Brazilian Children’s Early Text Production.” *Reading and Writing: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 20 (2007): 815–831.

DOI: [10.1007/s11145-006-9049-3](https://doi.org/10.1007/s11145-006-9049-3) [Save Citation](#) » [Export Citation](#) » [E-mail Citation](#) »

Examines unconventional word segmentation in written texts of young Brazilian children. These errors include putting spaces within what is supposed to be a single word and failing to put spaces between words. Unconventional word segmentation patterns are related to literacy skills, including reading, spelling, vocabulary, and morphological awareness.

Find this resource:

- Fayol, Michel, Michel Hupet, and Pierre Largy. “The Acquisition of Subject-Verb Agreement in Written French: From Novices to Experts’ Errors.” *Reading and Writing: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 11 (1999): 153–174.

DOI: [10.1023/A:1008038127807](https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1008038127807)[Save Citation »Export Citation »E-mail Citation »](#)

Studies different types of grammatical errors involving subject–verb agreement in French-speaking children of different ages and in expert writers. Findings suggest gradual automatization of subject–verb agreement. Performance moves from systematic errors to use of cognitively demanding rules to automatized (but sometimes incorrect) use of verb forms.

Find this resource:

- Hall, Nigel, and Anne Robinson, eds. *Language and Education Language*. Language and Education Library 9. Clevedon, UK: Multilingual Matters, 1996.

[Save Citation »Export Citation »E-mail Citation »](#)

This edited volume is the first book that draws together research on different aspects of punctuation learning, evaluating views and policies related to teaching and assessing punctuation knowledge. The volume covers such topics as young children’s punctuation knowledge, educators’ beliefs about punctuation teaching, and punctuation and other literacy skills.

Find this resource:

Relations Between Reading and Writing

Reading and writing are closely related and subserved by many of the same cognitive and linguistic skills. [Ehri 1987](#) conceptualizes both reading and spelling development as progressing through stages characterized by different types of knowledge about the orthography. [Fitzgerald and Shanahan 2000](#) discusses types of knowledge shared by reading and composing, while acknowledging important differences between the two processes. Fitzgerald and Shanahan also outline a preliminary developmental model of the relation between reading and composing. Other works study specific ways in which reading and writing skills may relate to one another. [Ouellette and Sénéchal 2008](#) reveals that practicing invented spelling enhances reading skills through the integration of print- and sound-related knowledge. [Share 1999](#) approaches the

relation between reading and spelling by examining whether phonology-based reading of novel letter strings improves subsequent spelling. In their meta-analysis, [Graham and Hebert 2011](#) reviews and analyze findings on the relation between higher-level literacy skills, reading comprehension, and composing. Writing practices and instruction are found to improve reading comprehension.

- Ehri, Linnea C. “Learning to Read and Spell Words.” *Journal of Literary Research* 19 (1987): 5–31.

DOI: [10.1080/10862968709547585](https://doi.org/10.1080/10862968709547585)[Save Citation »Export Citation »E-mail Citation »](#)

Reviews studies that examined children’s beginning reading and spelling skills and outlines stages of literacy development, focusing on different types of knowledge that children draw on as they acquire literacy skills. Ehri postulates that reading and spelling skills go through similar phases of development.

Find this resource:

- Fitzgerald, Jill, and Timothy Shanahan. “Reading and Writing Relations and Their Development.” *Educational Psychologist* 35 (2000): 39–50.

DOI: [10.1207/S15326985EP3501_5](https://doi.org/10.1207/S15326985EP3501_5)[Save Citation »Export Citation »E-mail Citation »](#)

Discusses both the commonalities and differences between reading and writing. The authors describe a model of reading–writing relations, highlighting changes in the types of knowledge that are important for different levels of development. Implications for instruction are also discussed.

Find this resource:

- Graham, Steve, and Michael Hebert. “Writing to Read: A Meta-Analysis of the Impact of Writing and Writing Instruction on Reading.” *Harvard Educational Review* 81 (2011): 710–744.

DOI: [10.17763/haer.81.4.t2k0m13756113566](https://doi.org/10.17763/haer.81.4.t2k0m13756113566)[Save Citation »Export Citation »E-mail Citation »](#)

A meta-analysis of studies exploring the influence of writing on reading. Results show that writing about materials read, instruction designed to improve writing skills, and increased writing practice enhance word reading and reading comprehension. The authors provide recommendations for teaching writing to improve students’ reading.

Find this resource:

- Ouellette, Gene, and Monique Sénéchal. “Pathways to Literacy: A Study of Invented Spelling and Its Role in Learning to Read.” *Child Development* 79 (2008): 899–913.

DOI: [10.1111/j.1467-8624.2008.01166.x](https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8624.2008.01166.x)[Save Citation »Export Citation »E-mail Citation »](#)

Uses a well-controlled training study to examine the relation between invented spelling and reading acquisition. Results suggest that invented spelling, together with feedback, enhances the integration of phonological and orthographic knowledge and improves children's reading abilities.

Find this resource:

- Share, David L. "Phonological Recoding and Orthographic Learning: A Direct Test of the Self-Teaching Hypothesis." *Journal of Experimental Child Psychology* 72 (1999): 95–129.

DOI: [10.1006/jecp.1998.2481](https://doi.org/10.1006/jecp.1998.2481)[Save Citation »Export Citation »E-mail Citation »](#)

In a series of experiments, Share tests the idea that phonological recoding of novel letter strings provides opportunities for learning orthographic representations. Results suggest that phonological, but not visual, processing contributes to orthographic learning. According to Share's self-teaching theory, reading in the form of recoding facilitates orthographic learning and spelling.

Find this resource:

Comparisons of Children Who Speak Different Languages and Dialects

Comparisons of literacy acquisition in different writing systems can provide insights into which aspects of reading and writing development are universal and which aspects are specific to a particular language or writing system. Such studies can also show how the rate of early literacy acquisition is affected by the nature of the writing system a child is learning. In their edited volume, [Harris and Hatano 1999](#) includes findings on acquisition of various aspects of reading and spelling in different orthographies. The edited volume by [Joshi and Aaron 2006](#) is a large collection of reports on literacy acquisition in a wide range of writing systems; findings from direct cross-linguistic comparisons are also discussed. [Caravolas 2004](#) reviews the literature on spelling development in different alphabetic writing systems. Much of the reviewed literature is based on the idea that writing systems can be arranged along a continuum from shallow writing systems, such as Spanish, which have straightforward relations between sounds and spellings to deep writing systems, such as English, which have less straightforward relations between sounds and spellings. Other research examines the impact of the dialect of a language that a child speaks on writing development. Taking advantage of systematic differences in Australian and British pronunciations of words, [Kemp 2009](#) finds an influence of such differences in spellings by children and adults. [Ivy and Masterson 2011](#) examines whether features of oral language influence the writing of African American learners and reports a decreasing effect of the dialect as children become more advanced writers.

- Caravolas, Markéta. “Spelling Development in Alphabetic Writing Systems: A Cross-Linguistic Perspective.” *European Psychologist* 9 (2004): 3–14.

DOI: [10.1027/1016-9040.9.1.3](https://doi.org/10.1027/1016-9040.9.1.3)[Save Citation »Export Citation »E-mail Citation »](#)

Reviews cross-linguistic evidence on how orthographic depth influences spelling development of learners of different alphabetic systems. Findings suggest a slower rate of acquisition in writing systems that are classified as deep. Skills including phonological awareness and letter knowledge appear to play similar roles across systems that differ in orthographic depth.

Find this resource:

- Harris, Margaret, and Giyoo Hatano, eds. *Learning to Read and Write: A Cross-Linguistic Perspective*. Cambridge Studies in Cognitive and Perceptual Development. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1999.

[Save Citation »Export Citation »E-mail Citation »](#)

Chapters in this volume examine how reading and spelling acquisition are influenced by characteristics of different orthographies at the levels of phonemes, syllables, and morphemes. Considers how factors such as instruction method and children’s knowledge prior to formal schooling interact with characteristics of a writing system to influence literacy development.

Find this resource:

- Ivy, Lennette J., and Julie J. Masterson. “A Comparison of Oral and Written English Styles in African American Students at Different Stages of Writing Development.” *Language, Speech, and Hearing Services in Schools* 42 (2011): 31–40.

DOI: [10.1044/0161-1461\(2010/09-0069\)](https://doi.org/10.1044/0161-1461(2010/09-0069))[Save Citation »Export Citation »E-mail Citation »](#)

Examines occurrences of features of African American English in students’ oral and written language. Results show a similar use of African American English in both modalities at early stages of development and a smaller dialectal influence in writing as children get older. Implications for instruction are also discussed.

Find this resource:

- Joshi, R. Malatesha, and P. G. Aaron, eds. *Handbook of Orthography and Literacy*. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum, 2006.

[Save Citation »Export Citation »E-mail Citation »](#)

The forty-plus chapters in this edited volume look at literacy development from a cross-linguistic perspective. The authors discuss the development of spelling and reading skills in learners of a number of different languages and writing systems. Implications for instruction are also considered.

Find this resource:

- Kemp, Nenagh. “The Spelling of Vowels Is Influenced by Australian and British English Dialect Differences.” *Scientific Studies of Reading* 13 (2009): 53–72.

DOI: [10.1080/10888430802633474](https://doi.org/10.1080/10888430802633474)[Save Citation »Export Citation »E-mail Citation »](#)

Studies the effects of dialect on vowel spellings in beginning and skilled users. The spellings of vowels by speakers of British and Australian English reflect subtle differences in the dialects. This persistent influence of phonology in spelling is discussed in relation to theoretical models of spelling development and skilled spelling.

Find this resource:

Bilingualism, Second-Language Learning, and Writing

Studies of bilingualism and second-language learning present interesting cases of the way in which children use available information and skills to acquire new knowledge. Such studies are also important in a practical sense, given that many children speak a language at home that differs from the one they use at school. The edited volume by [Durgunoğlu and Verhoeven 1998](#) is a review of psychological and educational perspectives on literacy development, highlighting the influence of both languages on children’s cognitive development. Comprehensively reviewing evidence of the influence of children’s first language on their ability to learn how to spell in English when it is their second language, [Figueredo 2006](#) concludes that first-language knowledge may facilitate or hinder learning of a second language depending on such factors as the similarities or differences between the languages. [Wang and Geva 2003](#) examines the interesting case of second-language learning of English in children who have acquired a non-alphabetic writing system, Chinese. Strategies developed for learning the deep Chinese orthography are adopted by this group of children to learn English.

- Durgunoğlu, Aydin Y., and Ludo Verhoeven, eds. *Literacy Development in a Multilingual Context: Cross-Cultural Perspectives*. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum, 1998.

[Save Citation »Export Citation »E-mail Citation »](#)

This volume provides psychological and educational perspectives on literacy development in multilingual and bilingual children. Discusses the joint influence of different languages on the cognitive development of children in multilingual societies. Broader topics such as instruction and policies are also included.

Find this resource:

- Figueredo, Lauren. “Using the Known to Chart the Unknown: A Review of First-Language Influence on the Development of English-as-a-Second-Language Spelling Skill.” *Reading and Writing: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 19 (2006): 873–905.

DOI: [10.1007/s11145-006-9014-1](https://doi.org/10.1007/s11145-006-9014-1)[Save Citation »](#)[Export Citation »](#)[E-mail Citation »](#)

Reviews twenty-seven studies investigating the influence of the first language on spelling in learners of English as a second language. Evidence of both positive and negative transfer of first-language knowledge has been reported. Figueredo discusses the importance of considering factors such as first-language proficiency and distance between the two languages.

Find this resource:

- Wang, Min, and Esther Geva. “Spelling Performance of Chinese Children Using English as a Second Language: Lexical and Visual–Orthographic Processes.” *Applied Psycholinguistics* 24 (2003): 1–25.

DOI: [10.1017/S0142716403000018](https://doi.org/10.1017/S0142716403000018)[Save Citation »](#)[Export Citation »](#)[E-mail Citation »](#)

Studies Chinese children’s learning of English as a second language. Chinese children show poorer use of phonological information but better knowledge of letter patterns in spelling than their native-English-speaking counterparts. Results suggest early transfer of first-language knowledge in second-language acquisition.

Find this resource:

Writing Difficulties

Studying writing in atypical learners can help illuminate typical development and can also help to show how instruction should be adapted for specific groups. [Arfé, et al. 2014](#) discusses findings related to writing development in a number of groups of children, including children with hearing loss and children with dyslexia. Other works examine writing or spelling development in specific groups of atypically developing children. Inconsistent with the view that dyslexic children compensate for their poor phonological skills with especially good knowledge of letter patterns, [Cassar, et al. 2005](#) finds similar patterns of spellings in children with dyslexia and younger, typically developing children of the same spelling level. [Berninger, et al. 2008](#) examines the relation between writing-related skills in children with dyslexia and reports that spelling is a key predictor of composition. [Bishop and Clarkson 2003](#) analyzed written narratives of children who have developed speech and/or language impairment that demonstrate the usefulness of writing, particularly spelling, as a sensitive assessment task. Children who are deaf are increasingly receiving cochlear implants, and [Geers and Hayes 2011](#) is the first study that examines a wide range of literacy skills in deaf adolescents with years of cochlear implant experience. Their results highlight the role of phonological processing in literacy acquisition.

- Arfé, Barbara, Julie Dockrell, and Virginia W. Berninger, eds. *Writing Development in Children with Hearing Loss, Dyslexia, or Oral Language Problems*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2014.

[Save Citation »Export Citation »E-mail Citation »](#)

Children with oral language difficulties frequently fail to develop age-appropriate writing skills. The chapters in this edited volume consider the effects of this in various groups of children, including deaf children and children with dyslexia. Implications for assessment and instruction are considered, with the goal being to improve the quality of education for these children.

Find this resource:

- Berninger, Virginia W., Kathleen H. Nielsen, Robert D. Abbott, Ellen Wijsman, and Wendy Raskind. "Writing Problems in Developmental Dyslexia: Under-Recognized and Under-Treated." *Journal of School Psychology* 46 (2008): 1–21.

DOI: [10.1016/j.jsp.2006.11.008](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jsp.2006.11.008)[Save Citation »Export Citation »E-mail Citation »](#)

Uses structural equation modeling to examine relations between writing-related skills and composition in children with dyslexia. Spelling, but not other related factors including handwriting and grapho-motor planning, contributes to composition. Implications for teaching writing to children with dyslexia are discussed.

Find this resource:

- Bishop, Dorothy V. M., and Barbara Clarkson. "Written Language as a Window into Residual Language Deficits: A Study of Children with Persistent and Residual Speech and Language Impairments." *Cortex* 39 (2003): 215–237.

DOI: [10.1016/S0010-9452\(08\)70106-0](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0010-9452(08)70106-0)[Save Citation »Export Citation »E-mail Citation »](#)

Analyzes the written narratives of twin children who have developed speech and/or language impairments, demonstrating that writing is a particularly sensitive index of language difficulties. Children with language impairments show poor writing skills, especially spelling. Results also suggest a close link between deficits in phonological processing and language impairments.

Find this resource:

- Cassar, Marie, Rebecca Treiman, Louisa Moats, Tatiana C. Pollo, and Brett Kessler. "How Do the Spellings of Children with Dyslexia Compare with Those of Nondyslexic Children?" *Reading and Writing: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 18 (2005): 27–49.

DOI: [10.1007/s11145-004-2345-x](https://doi.org/10.1007/s11145-004-2345-x)[Save Citation »Export Citation »E-mail Citation »](#)

Compares spellings of children with dyslexia and younger, typically developing children matched for spelling abilities. The dyslexic and typical children produce similar spellings and show similar phonological and graphotactic knowledge. Results speak against the view that dyslexic children show a unique pattern of performance characterized by impaired phonological processing but well-developed graphotactic knowledge.

Find this resource:

- Geers, Ann E., and Heather Hayes. "Reading, Writing, and Phonological Processing Skills of Adolescents with 10 or More Years of Cochlear Implant Experience." *Ear and Hearing* 32 (2011): 49S–59S.

DOI: [10.1097/aud.0b013e3181fa41fa](https://doi.org/10.1097/aud.0b013e3181fa41fa)[Save Citation »Export Citation »E-mail Citation »](#)

Assesses the literacy skills of deaf adolescents who received cochlear implants as preschoolers. Although many students with implants achieve age-appropriate reading skills, they show poorer spelling, writing, and phonological processing than their hearing peers. Phonological processing and early reading are found to influence literacy levels in high school.

Find this resource:

Instruction

Studies in which different teaching methods are compared systematically in laboratory settings or in classrooms can provide good control over extraneous variables and have important implications for instruction. [Ball and Blachman 1991](#) reports one such study, examining the effects of phoneme awareness training on kindergarteners' reading and spelling skills. Focusing on a different writing system, [Packard, et al. 2006](#) explores whether instruction about the morphological and graphic characteristics of Chinese facilitates children's learning of characters. Other researchers have worked toward the goal of equipping educators with practices and knowledge necessary for effective teaching. To guide literacy instructors, [Graham, et al. 2013](#) provides evidence-based recommendations about practices pertaining to specific aspects of literacy. [Moats 1994](#) evaluates experienced teachers' knowledge of linguistic concepts and emphasizes the need for teachers to increase their knowledge of language structure.

- Ball, Eileen W., and Benita A. Blachman. "Does Phoneme Awareness Training in Kindergarten Make a Difference in Early Word Recognition and Developmental Spelling?" *Reading Research Quarterly* 26 (1991): 49–66.

DOI: [10.1598/rrq.26.1.3](https://doi.org/10.1598/rrq.26.1.3)[Save Citation »Export Citation »E-mail Citation »](#)

Studies the effects of phoneme awareness training on early literacy skills. Training in segmenting words into phonemes along with training in associations between letters and sounds, but not training in letter-sound associations alone, leads to significant improvement in word segmentation, early reading, and early spelling.

Find this resource:

- Graham, Steve, Charles A. MacArthur, and Jill Fitzgerald, eds. *Best Practices in Writing Instruction*. 2d ed. New York: Guilford, 2013.

[Save Citation »Export Citation »E-mail Citation »](#)

Presents theoretical frameworks for discussing literacy instruction. Reviews research findings on effective practices related to specific aspects of literacy, including phonological awareness, comprehension, and writing. A useful guide to help teachers improve their literacy teaching.

Find this resource:

- Moats, Louisa C. “The Missing Foundation in Teacher Education: Knowledge of the Structure of Spoken and Written Language.” *Annals of Dyslexia* 44 (1994): 81–102.

DOI: [10.1007/bf02648156](https://doi.org/10.1007/bf02648156)[Save Citation »Export Citation »E-mail Citation »](#)

Children benefit from direct instruction about linguistic structure. However, some experienced teachers have an insufficient understanding of such language concepts as phonemes and sound-letter correspondences. Moats discusses the usefulness of language structure knowledge in teaching and also provides recommendations for teacher education.

Find this resource:

- Packard, Jerome L., Xi Chen, Wenling Li, et al. “Explicit Instruction in Orthographic Structure and Word Morphology Helps Chinese Children Learn to Write Characters.” *Reading and Writing: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 19 (2006): 457–487.

DOI: [10.1007/s11145-006-9003-4](https://doi.org/10.1007/s11145-006-9003-4)[Save Citation »Export Citation »E-mail Citation »](#)

Instruction designed to increase children’s morphological and graphotactic knowledge facilitates copying and writing of Chinese characters. Such instruction is thought to help children draw on different sources of information in learning to write characters.

Find this resource:

[back to top](#)

Childhood Studies

- [About Childhood Studies »](#)
- [Meet the Editorial Board »](#)

Jump to Other Articles:

Up

- [Aboriginal Childhoods](#)
- [Addams, Jane](#)
- [ADHD, Sociological Perspectives on](#)
- [Adolescence and Youth](#)
- [Adolescent Consent to Medical Treatment](#)
- [Adoption and Fostering](#)
- [Adoption and Fostering, History of Cross-Country](#)
- [Advertising and Marketing, Psychological Approaches to](#)
- [Advertising and Marketing, Sociocultural Approaches to](#)
- [Africa](#)
- [African American Children and Childhood](#)
- [After-school Hours and Activities](#)
- [Animals, Children and](#)
- [Animations, Comic Books, and Manga](#)
- [Anthropology of Childhood](#)
- [Archaeology of Childhood](#)
- [Ariès, Philippe](#)
- [Attachment in Children and Adolescents](#)
- [Australia, History of Adoption and Fostering in](#)
- [Autism, Medical Model Perspectives on](#)
- [Bereavement](#)
- [Best Interest of the Child](#)
- [Body, Children and the](#)
- [Body Image](#)
- [Boy Scouts/Girl Guides](#)
- [Bronfenbrenner, Urie](#)
- [Buddhist Views of Childhood](#)
- [Byzantine Childhoods](#)
- [Child Beauty Pageants](#)
- [Child Homelessness](#)
- [Childcare Manuals](#)
- [Childhood and Borders](#)
- [Childhood as Discourse](#)
- [Children's Views of Childhood](#)
- [China, Japan, and Korea](#)
- [Citizenship](#)
- [Civil Rights Movement and Desegregation](#)
- [Class](#)
- [Classical World, Children in the](#)
- [Clothes and Costume, Children's](#)
- [Colonization and Nationalism](#)
- [Common World Childhoods](#)

- [Competitiveness, Children and](#)
- [Congenital Disabilities](#)
- [Consumer Culture, Children and](#)
- [Consumption, Child and Teen](#)
- [Critical Approaches to Children's Work and the Concept of ...](#)
- [Crying](#)
- [Disability](#)
- [Discipline and Punishment](#)
- [Discrimination](#)
- [Disney, Walt](#)
- [Divorce And Custody](#)
- [Dolls](#)
- [Domestic Violence](#)
- [Drawings, Children's](#)
- [Early Childhood](#)
- [Education](#)
- [Environment, Children and the](#)
- [Ethics in Research with Children](#)
- [Eugenics](#)
- [Evolutionary Studies of Childhood](#)
- [Fathers](#)
- [Female Genital Cutting](#)
- [Feral and "Wild" Children](#)
- [Fetuses and Embryos](#)
- [Films about Children](#)
- [Folklore](#)
- [Food](#)
- [Foundlings and Abandoned Children](#)
- [Freud, Anna](#)
- [Freud, Sigmund](#)
- [Friends and Peers: Psychological Perspectives](#)
- [Froebel, Friedrich](#)
- [Gay and Lesbian Parents](#)
- [Gender and Childhood](#)
- [Geographies, Children's](#)
- [Globalization](#)
- [Hall, G. Stanley](#)
- [Hispanic Childhoods \(U.S.\)](#)
- [Historical Approaches to Child Witches](#)
- [History of Adoption and Fostering in Canada](#)
- [History of Childhood in America](#)
- [History of Childhood in Canada](#)
- [Homeschooling](#)
- [Infancy and Ethnography](#)
- [Innocence and Childhood](#)
- [Institutional Care](#)

- [Islamic Views of Childhood](#)
- [Juvenile Detention in the US](#)
- [Labor, Child](#)
- [Latin America](#)
- [Learning, Language](#)
- [Learning to Write](#)
- [Legends, Contemporary](#)
- [Literary Representations of Childhood](#)
- [Literature, Children's](#)
- [Magazines for Teenagers](#)
- [Maltreatment, Child](#)
- [Masculinities/Boyhood](#)
- [Material Cultures of Western Childhoods](#)
- [Media Culture, Children's](#)
- [Medieval and Anglo-Saxon Childhoods](#)
- [Menstruation](#)
- [Middle Childhood](#)
- [Middle East](#)
- [Migration](#)
- [Miscarriage](#)
- [Mothers](#)
- [Multi-culturalism and Education](#)
- [Music and Babies](#)
- [Native American and Aboriginal Canadian Childhood](#)
- [New Reproductive Technologies and Assisted Conception](#)
- [Nursery Rhymes](#)
- [Organizations, Nongovernmental](#)
- [Orphans](#)
- [Parental Gender Preferences, The Social Construction of](#)
- [Parenting](#)
- [Pediatrics, History of](#)
- [Peer Culture](#)
- [Peter Pan](#)
- [Piaget, Jean](#)
- [Play](#)
- [Politics, Children and](#)
- [Poverty, Rights, and Well-being, Child](#)
- [Prostitution and Pornography, Child](#)
- [Psychoanalysis](#)
- [Queer Theory and Childhood](#)
- [Race and Ethnicity](#)
- [Racism, Children and](#)
- [Readers, Children as](#)
- [Refugee and Displaced Children](#)
- [Rights, Children's](#)
- [Risk and Resilience](#)

- [Russia](#)
- [School Shootings](#)
- [Sex Education in the United States](#)
- [Sexuality](#)
- [Siblings](#)
- [Social and Cultural Capital of Childhood](#)
- [Social Movements, Children's](#)
- [Social Policy, Children and](#)
- [Socialization and Child Rearing](#)
- [Sociology of Childhood](#)
- [South African Birth to Twenty Project](#)
- [South Asia](#)
- [Special Education](#)
- [Spock, Benjamin](#)
- [Sports and Organized Games](#)
- [Street Children](#)
- [Subcultures](#)
- [Sure Start](#)
- [Teenage Fathers](#)
- [Teenage Pregnancy](#)
- [Television](#)
- [The Bible and Children](#)
- [Theories, Pedagogic](#)
- [Tourism](#)
- [Toys](#)
- [Twins and Multiple Births](#)
- [United Kingdom, History of Adoption and Fostering in the](#)
- [United States, Schooling in the](#)
- [Value of Children](#)
- [Views of Childhood, Jewish and Christian](#)
- [Violence, Children and](#)
- [Visual Representations of Childhood](#)
- [Voice, Participation, and Agency](#)
- [Vygotsky, Lev and His Cultural-historical Approach to Deve...](#)
- [War](#)
- [Welfare Law in the United States, Child](#)
- [Well-Being, Child](#)
- [Western Europe and Scandinavia](#)
- [Witchcraft in the Contemporary World, Children and](#)
- [Work and Apprenticeship, Children's](#)
- [Young Carers](#)
- [Young Lives](#)

Down