Knowing how to write effectively is essential in the workplace and in daily life. Parents can play a key role to help their teen become a better writer. More than anything else, parents can be an enthusiastic audience for the writers growing up in their family. Writing is recursive and cyclical, with writers moving back and forth through a series of stages including:

1. **Prewriting.** Writers generate ideas by brainstorming; reading literature; creating life maps, webs, and story charts; developing word banks; deciding on form, audience, voice, and purpose.
2. **Drafting.** Writers get their ideas on paper without concern for conventions.
3. **Revising.** Writers proof their own work by reading aloud and reading for sensibility. They improve the message with additions, imagery, and details.
4. **Editing.** Writers proof their own writing for correctness, editing for mechanics and spelling.
5. **Publishing.** Writers publish their written pieces by posting their work online, reading it aloud, making books. This is a time to celebrate!

Here are some simple tips parents can follow to help their teens improve writing at home:

- **Set a good example.** Let your child see you write thank-you letters, to-do lists, emails, and outline projects at home. Share your process as you write.
- **Give the gift of a journal or writer’s notebook.** A journal begins the writing process, and may be the source of ideas for a new poem or story. Journals also provide a private outlet for emotions. Respect your teen’s need to keep some writing private.
- **Write to your teen.** Leave short notes on the refrigerator, in the lunch box, or send a text-message or email.
- **Write together.** Keep a family travel journal, create a scrapbook, make holiday cards and newsletters, or blog as a family.
- **Show your interest.** Ask your teen to read his or her writing aloud to you. This technique helps writers catch run-on sentences, spelling errors, over-used words.
- **Respond as a reader.** Comment on your teen’s writing in ways that are thoughtful but uncritical. If you are confused, say so. Discuss what confuses you and suggest specific features in the writing that can be improved—content, organization, vocabulary, etc.

Here are a few recommended websites for supporting teen writers at home:

- **NoodleTools** ([www.noodletools.com](http://www.noodletools.com)) offers step-by-step tips for researching information online.
- **Scholastic Parents** ([http://www2.scholastic.com/browse/parentsHome.jsp](http://www2.scholastic.com/browse/parentsHome.jsp)) offers activities that build writing skills at different grade levels.

For more newsletters like this and information about the Collaborative on Early Adolescence, visit [http://www.niu.edu/cea/](http://www.niu.edu/cea/).