

We're glad you're interested in writing an expert/opinion piece for our Real Mom or Real Dad department.

Your Real Parent article should be about 1000 words.

Here's some editorial help:

1. **Find your topic.** 7 Things I've Learned about Toddlers; How To Connect With Your Teen; 8 Secrets to Smoother Bedtimes; How To Get Kids Hooked on Math; The 5 Best Films for Family Movie Night; 6 Ways Middle-Schoolers Can Have Fun in Richmond; 5 Things We Did Right – just button down your main topic. (The number of points used is up to the Real Parent writer.)
2. **Write your lead-in or introduction** (usually about one paragraph). This will be the place to talk about your expertise in the area and/or personal experience with the topic. Why are you writing about this topic? Try to put a little of yourself and your family in here if you can.
3. **Start a list.** Actually write down your item headers, which is really the first line of each point. For example: Read, read and read some more. Turn off the TV. Start a business. Cook dinner once a week. Short simple points that people can glance at and decide whether or not they want to read the whole thing.
4. The beauty of this list format is that you don't have to transition from point to point. Just state your "reason, thing, or step," etc. and get on with it, explaining it in a few sentences (or more if necessary.) Then move on to your next point.
5. At the end of the article, try to use a paragraph or a few sentences to wrap up your main point.
6. Don't forget the endnote: "Real Mom or Real Dad" _____ teaches, works, whatever (if applicable) and lives in with son? daughter? ages?

Generally, try to make your Real Parent piece personal. Tell the reader about you and your family and your experience. Be informative, but don't overwrite. Put anecdotal info in it. Try to put your kids and family in it. It will be helpful to go online and read past articles for direction.

This popular column is written every month for RFM by real parents who want to share valuable information with other parents. We offer a \$50 Target gift card to say "thanks!" to our Real Parent contributors. You can also submit to this format as many times as you like.