



Supporting Writing at Home

Writing and reading are part of every aspect of your child's life and while children do lots of literacy based activities at school (e.g. writing, reading, handwriting, phonics), there are lots of ways that you can support your child at home.

This booklet aims to give lots of suggestions and ideas for making writing fun and meaningful at home and improving achievement levels at school.

For younger children, please also read the information on the Early Years page, including developing Physical Skills.

General Tips and Ideas

- The basis of all good writing is dependent on knowing lots of words and being able to join them together in interesting ways.

Encourage your child/ren to:

- explain a game or activity
 - describe a person, place, picture or thing
 - retell stories
 - talk about things they have done e.g. visits, day at school - encourage detail
 - predict what might happen next in a story, TV programme or sequel to a film
 - play word games
- Be a reading model and read to your child (e.g. stories, poems, factual information such as timetables, magazines, newspaper reports, letters, emails, adverts, instructions) – discuss the ways authors use words to shape their ideas.
 - Be a writing model and encourage your child to write alongside you for real purposes e.g. shopping lists, birthday/Christmas lists, labels, invitations, thank you letters, emails to friends, postcards, cards for relatives, scrap books of holidays/hobbies/special events, diaries, posters for real events, short stories or poems for family members, menus, texting, bedroom or house rules.

- Have an exciting selection of writing materials available e.g. a range of pencils, pens, coloured crayons, writing icing, writing soaps for bathtime.
- Praise your child for trying and don't dwell on mistakes. Focus on content and enjoyment of writing for fun and for purpose.

Early Writing

- Encourage young children to look at print on road signs, food packets, in books, magazines and catalogues. Go to the library and read favourite books over and over again. Enjoy them.
- Try fun activities that strengthen your child's hand e.g. cutting, painting, squeezing playdough, picking up small things with tweezers and pegs.
- Play memory games such as pairs, Kim's game, I went to the market, or order pictures from familiar stories.
- Use magnetic letters and make small words together. Leave a message on the fridge door and encourage your child to reply.
- Praise play writing - early squiggles and marks show that your child is beginning to understand writing.
- Use exciting new words that widen and enrich your child's vocabulary. Explain the meaning.

- Make up a story together about one of their toys. You write the story as they say the words. Make up a little booklet. Take photos and use the pictures in the book.
- Buy stickers of a favourite TV programme or book. Make your own little book about it.
- Let your child write their own Christmas cards, thank you letters, cards or emails to friends or relatives, invitations to a party, or a list of things they need to take on holiday.
- Cut up letters from magazines for children to make their names and short sentences.
- Make handwriting interesting - practise drawing letters in sand, water, or paint, use white boards, playdough, pastry or shaving foam.

More Confident Writers

- Continue talking about experiences. This remains the key to good writing. Talk about what has been seen, heard, smelt, tasted and touched with as many details as possible.
- Play word-building games to develop descriptive vocabulary such as Boggle, Scrabble, Guess Who, 'What am I?' (one person thinks of something to describe. They give clues by describing it, without saying its name. Other players have to guess what it is with as few clues as possible.)

- Encourage your child to sound out words for themselves rather than telling them how to spell words correctly. This encourages them to think for themselves and to be prepared to have a go. They will learn the correcting spelling over time.
- Create silly sentences or tongue twisters using alliteration (a group of words that all begin with the same sound) e.g. Sad Sid slipped on Sam's salad sandwich.
- Encourage your child to rehearse their sentence out loud before they write it down. Also encourage children to punctuate their sentences with a fullstop and a capital letter. Celebrate what the writing says first of all rather than focusing on errors. If a tricky word has been used in an interesting way, this should be praised even if it is spelt wrongly. Remember, it is difficult to get everything right when you are learning!
- Let children write part of shopping lists and then let them be responsible for carrying the list and finding certain items.
- After making a cake, doing a craft activity or playing a game, challenge children to write instructions for someone else to follow.
- Make up fun ways to remember how to spell difficult words e.g. Big Elephants Can Actually Understand Small Elephants = because, what has a hat, when has a hen.

- Play 'I Spy' and 'Hangman' which encourage use of sounds and spellings.
- Encourage your child to learn weekly spellings and phonic group spellings. Write the spelling in sentences with accurate punctuation and practice high frequency words and handwriting. Also ensure your child completes homework on time, take an interest in what they are doing, and praise effort.

Confident Writers

- Help your child write a letter to their favourite author. Details can be found on the internet.
- As with early writers be aware of occasions when children can be involved in writing - shopping lists, cards, phone messages, notes to friends, invitations to family occasions, emailing friends, blogging, texting (be aware of safety).
- Write information pages or booklets about a hobby or something they find interesting e.g. dinosaurs, class topics, sport stars etc. Illustrate and label. Encourage use of paragraphs for blocks of information.
- Write postcards from holidays and record holiday events in a diary that can be shared with friends or family.

- Provide your child with a comfortable place to work and exciting writing materials. A dictionary or spell check on a computer would also be useful.
- Let your child see you being a model writer but also let them see that you are not perfect! Checking, making changes and editing what you write are a natural part of writing.
- After your child has produced written homework ask them to proof read their work for accuracy. After they have done this, have a look at the piece yourself.
- Ask your child what his/her writing targets are from time to time and help them work specifically on these.
- Read books to, and with, them that are at a higher level than their own reading to expose them to ambitious vocabulary and complex sentence structure.

Encouraging Reluctant Writers

- If your child has barriers towards writing, or low self-esteem as a writer, praising and valuing your child's writing is very important. Your child may need support when they write and may need you to talk through their ideas first and help with composing and structure.
- Help your child go over problem spellings. It is extremely frustrating for children to have to battle with spelling and handwriting when they want to get their ideas down on paper. Knowing high frequency

spellings will aid the flow of writing and enable the use of a vocabulary rich language. (Consider being trapped into writing 'big' when you really wanted to write 'enormous'). Encourage children to sound out and have a go at more tricky words or give them the spellings.

- Remember that writing does not have to be lengthy or boring!
- Writing for real purposes is more meaningful and rewarding for children and creates a fun and interesting way for children to develop their writing skills.

Useful Websites

Lots of links to encourage writing

<http://www.primaryhomeworkhelp.co.uk/literacy/index.htm>

How to write your best story ever!

<https://www.oxfordowl.co.uk/for-home/kids-activities/how-to-write-your-best-story-ever>

