



Activities to support writing at home

Talk

- Regularly finding time to talk with and listen to your child has a huge impact upon your child's language development. Make the most of any opportunity to engage in conversation with your child and role model good language skills.
- Role-play: young children enjoy dressing up and rehearsing everyday experiences in the home. This might include playing 'schools', 'shops', 'offices', re-enacting a favourite TV programme or book. Provide children with simple play equipment to enable them to immerse themselves in their role play world; e.g. dolls, toys, simple costumes or props, empty boxes, construction kits such as lego or mobilo.
- Performance: children enjoy putting on small plays, puppet shows and performances. Encourage your child and their friends to put together a performance, using a well-known story or poem as a starting point. They may even enjoy writing their own play script.
- Enjoy the arts together – this could be creating something artistic together or going to a gallery/museum or performance and discussing the experience.
- Posh talk! Good talk encourages good writing, therefore the way we speak impacts our ability to write in a formal manner. Every now and then challenge your family to talk only in a 'posh' voice for a set period of time (e.g. during dinner time or during a short car journey). This will encourage you all to use a greater breadth of vocabulary and pronounce your words correctly.
- Jibber jabber: this game is a fun game to play while on a long journey. Think of a couple of celebrities that your child will know (or even family members or friends) and decide upon a funny conversation that they might have. E.g. David Beckham might call the Queen to ask advice about looking after corgis. Justin Beiber might call Donald Trump for hair dressing advice!
- Play Pictionary and charades to develop language choices.

Fine & Gross motor skills

- Dough disco - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i-IfzeG1aC4>
- Squiggle while you wiggle –practise mark making to music on pieces of paper. Use rolls of paper (these can be purchased from IKEA) and writing materials (e.g. chinks, fat marker pens) to make a range of circles, lines and arches.
- Cutting and sticking requires the use of fine motor skills and children enjoy making crafts. Also use paint brushes and water to 'paint' and 'write' on outside surfaces.
- Picking up items with large tweezers, such as pasta and rice, and placing them into pots promote fine motor skills. Threading shoelaces through holes in card will also improve these skills.
- Mark making and mindfulness colouring-in supports older children, as well as young ones, to take care and time with their presentation skills.

Spelling and phonics

- Board games (and their computer based counter-parts) can support spelling skills; e.g. Scrabble, Scrabble Dash, Boggle and Taboo.
- Hangman and different variations of this game, including Wheel of Fortune.
Sequential hangman or Shannon's Game: The same as traditional hangman but children have to get the first letter correct before moving onto the second letter and so on.
Dice hangman: Play in pairs – have a selection of words in front of you to use. Player 1 draws the correct number of dashes for their chosen word and player 2 rolls a dice. Player 1 writes in as many letters to match the number on the dice, but in any order. Player 2 then guesses the missing letters to create the word.
Wheel of fortune: Player 1 draws the correct number of dashes for their chosen phrase. Player 2 can guess only 10 letters, and then should attempt to complete the well-known phrase.
- Phonics dash: children locate as many items around the house beginning with a certain sound. This can be developed by finding items ending with a certain sound or even with the sound somewhere within the word. This game can be easily made into an art activity for young learners by painting or drawing things with the selected sound.
- Finish: this game provides a scaffold for struggling spellers. Start by writing parts of a word; e.g. th__st. Set a timer of a minute or two and see who can make as many words as possible that start and end with that combination.
- Words within words: write a very long word for your child and see how many words they can make out of it. Use 'antidisestablishmentarianism' as a starter!
- Word blocks: draw a 3x3 grid and write a different letter in each square. It must contain at least one vowel. Players need to make as many words as they can using only those letters within an agreed time limit.
- Word ladders: This game can be adapted for different abilities.
Option 1 – give players a word with 3 or 4 phonemes in (sounds); e.g. pain = p.ai.n. Children then have to see how many other words they can make by changing just one letter at a time, then return to their starting word. E.g. Pain – Main – Mail – Maid – Said – Raid – Rain – Pain.
Option 2 – have a theme for your word ladder; e.g. animals. The aim is to make a list of words in the time given by making sure that the last letter of each word becomes the first of the next word. E.g. lion, newt, tiger, rabbit, terrapin.



Developing vocabulary

Vocabulary is developed through exposure to a range of word choices, which will mainly be achieved through talking with role-models (adults and older children) and through reading a breadth of good quality texts. Below are just a few extra activities that will also develop vocabulary choices.

- In the manner of the word: a group game. One person is the 'adverb guesser' and leaves the room whilst the others agree on an adverb (e.g. slowly). When the 'adverb guesser' returns to the room they can ask the other players to act out something in the style of the adverb. The guesser then tries to guess the adverb that is being acted out.
- Fast poem. Children write a four line poem about a subject of their choice using the following structure: line 1 = 1 noun, line 2 = 2 adjectives, line 3 = 3 adverbs, line 4 = 4 verbs.
Spaghetti
Thin and soft,
Silently, slowly, easily,
Slipping, sliding, slithering, disappearing.
- Anagrams: create anagrams for your child to solve. Alternatively they can create their own funny anagrams. E.g. Astronomers = moon-starers; Mother-in-law = The warm lion!
- Cross word making: these can be made on squared paper or you could use the link to create them online. <http://www.puzzle-maker.com/CW/>

Writing sentences

- Labels and captions are a super way to support early writing. Captions can be used in scrapbooks and labels for helping to organise a space in the home.
- Conditionals: player 1 writes a hypothetical statement starting with 'if' or 'when'. They then fold it over before passing to player 2. Player 2 then selects a subject and writes a sentence in the conditional or future tense – using the words 'would', 'should', 'will' or 'could'. Repeat this process three or four times and then reveal the sentences created. E.g. If the world was made of chocolate, a mole would tunnel deep.



- Chuck the chimp! This game can be adapted in many ways and great with a range of abilities. You will need a soft toy that can be thrown around and a group of you to make it fun. Rename the game depending on the cuddly toy chosen; e.g. lob the lion, toss the tiger, bung the bear!
Game 1: This develops the use of conjunctions. The group writes down a range of conjunctions onto post-its and spread these out in the middle of the circle. Give the group a sentence starter, such as "Colin sprinted down the road...". Next chuck the chimp (or other toy) at a child who will then repeat the sentence opener and use a conjunction to add an additional clause. E.g. Colin sprinted down the road *because he was scared of the lion chasing him*. This child then chucks the chimp to another child and they also repeat the sentence opener but select a different conjunction and additional clause.
Game 2: Using the same idea as the first game, but sentences start with a conjunction and end with the given phrase/clause; e.g. Because he was scared of the lion chasing him, Colin sprinted down the road.
- Poetic sentences: Use a repeating pattern to help emphasise the idea of writing interesting sentences, e.g. In my magic box there is a leaping lizard. In my magic box there is a cool cucumber. In my magic box there is a terrifying turtle ticking a tiger's tail.
- At the airport: This activity encourages children to write a range of different types of sentences that they might hear in a particular setting, such as the airport. When your child has to join you on an errand or wait with you ask them to jot down any examples of the following that they might hear: a question, a statement, an instruction, an explanation. These sentences can be collected and might encourage your child to write a short story about their experience. This game can be adapted by asking your child to think of sentences to describe what they see, hear or smell. You could ask them to write a simile, a metaphor, alliteration or personification.

Generating story ideas

- Purchase a set of Rory's Story Cubes to support your child to generate ideas. There are a range of story cubes that can be purchased to generate ideas for a range of writing styles. Visit www.storycubes.com to buy physical cubes or purchase the app.
- Scholastics have a wide range of exciting story ideas that children of all ages can use to write their own stories. The website also includes different formats for your child to write in; e.g. newspaper, postcard, letter or story. Children can print their writing directly from the website. <http://www.scholastic.com/teachers/story-starters/index.html>
- Finishing stories: children don't have to write a complete story, especially if they find it very hard to start writing on an empty page. Instead ask them to finish a story. Talk about the story and possible ideas before they start writing. Stuart Stories website has some great activity ideas, including stories that can be finished by children of all ages. <http://www.stuartstories.com/activities/finishme.html>



- Minecraft and lego: both of these resources can be useful ways to help children plan simple stories, especially those who are reluctant. By using a medium that the child already enjoys they can easily create imaginary worlds that can later be used to write a short story.
- Music videos: many music videos are narratives in themselves. Share an appropriate music video with your child and ask them to write the narrative to go with it. They might decide to write it as a story, a synopsis or a play script.
- Create a comic, short animation or movie. Use mobile devices to support your child to take images that can be turned into short stories. There are many apps available that will support this including imovie and comic life.

Non-fiction writing

- Children can keep an online journal, where they can download pictures from mobile devices to illustrate it. Journi is an app that can be used even when you are offline, so makes it easy to update when travelling.
- Encourage children to write for a range of purposes. Young children enjoy filling in forms as part of their role play, so pass on your unwanted paperwork for them to play with at home. Children can act as your PA – writing out phone messages, writing down orders for drinks and food, creating shopping lists or doing an audit of what is in the messy cupboard (we all have one!).
- Write a recipe: this is achievable for all abilities. Children can start by taking photographs during a cooking session then write out the captions. More able children can write out the full recipe with a list of ingredients and imperative instructions.
- Instructions: ask your child to teach you how to play one of their favourite games (including console games and apps) and ask them to write down step by step instructions to help you. Children like to be helpful so you could ask them to help a grandparent by writing down how to use a new appliance or piece of technology.
- Explanations: children can write an explanation describing how something works. They could include labelled diagrams and pictures.
- Letter of persuasion/complaint: children like to argue for a worthy cause, so you could ask them to write a letter of persuasion or complaint to an organisation. Environmental issues are always close to children's hearts so this could be a good starting point.
- Write to a celebrity or children's author – they might even get a reply!
- Write a thank you letter after visiting friends or to a holiday company.

The list is endless so let your imagination go wild!!



Other useful writing resources

- BBC bitesize for KS1 and KS2:
KS1 - <http://www.bbc.co.uk/education/subjects/zgkw2hv>
KS2 - <http://www.bbc.co.uk/education/subjects/zv48q6f>
- Phonics:
<http://www.letters-and-sounds.com/>