

Parents' Guidance: Key Stage 1



Remember that you are a role model for your child. Your child will copy you. Make sure that they see you enjoying books and writing even if you don't think you're good at it.

Make sure that your child knows what reading and writing are for by talking about what you are doing, e.g. reading a description in a holiday brochure, writing your shopping list.

Finding time to read together every day will help your child with reading, writing and spelling. You want a quiet time when you are not feeling rushed. Bedtime is an obvious time, but there is no set time of day for reading. It goes on all of the time, anywhere. Always have a book to hand. An overlong wait at the dentist will seem much shorter with a book to read. If you're not both enjoying it, stop. Little and often, when you're both in the mood is best.

- Board games will help with matching pictures and words
- Provide opportunities for them to select their own books by taking them to the library and bookshops. Keep your eyes open for book and storytelling events taking place in your library
- Looking at lots of styles of print will help with recognition of letters, even when they are not exactly the same
- Play tapes of favourite stories.

Remember, that every child is different. All children go through the same stages, but not necessarily in the same order. If you are worried, try not to pass your concerns onto your child, and talk to your child's teacher who will be able to advise you about what you should do.

How should I listen to my child read?

First of all find a comfortable place and time when neither of you is feeling rushed. Encourage your child to choose a book or choose one together.

Before reading, spend some time talking about the cover and what each of you thinks the book is going to be about. You might go through the book together talking about the pictures.

Allow your child to re-read favourite stories, or to hear you re-read them. Knowing a familiar book will help them to notice more about the words on the page and they will start to recognise the patterns in new words and stories. You might like to try re-reading a story, missing out some words and getting your child to fill in the blanks. Different words, which mean the same, may be suggested. This will get your child thinking about the story and the meaning of words.

As they read, point underneath each word. Without stopping the flow of the story, talk about the pictures, ask questions about the characters, discuss what might happen next, relate to your child's experiences, e.g. "Do you remember when we went swimming". All this will help with their understanding of what the book is about.

If they get stuck, encourage them to use all of the available information and everything they know to make a guess. Remember that reading is not a test. They should look at the pictures and remind them of what has happened in the story. Use other clues such as what sound the word begins with, similar words on the page, which they have read already, reading on to the end of the sentence. Don't keep them guessing for long.

Help them to spell the word out slowly using the sounds of the letters and then say it faster together.

Your child may talk about phonemes instead of sounds. Their teacher will have taught them to do this so you should do the same. A phoneme is each separate sound made by one or more letters, e.g. 'th', 'ch', 'ai'.

Praise them when they work out a new word for themselves, and when they go back and correct a word which they have misread. Remember:

- Pause - give your child some thinking time
- Prompt - give your child a clue e.g. refer to the picture
- Praise - recognise your child's effort, tell them what they have done well

When your child reads and gets a word wrong let them finish the sentence before you correct them. Children often realise what the word should be, go back and correct themselves. If they don't realise that the word has been read wrongly you could ask something like, 'Does that make sense?'

Sometimes read the book together taking turns to read pages. Take the parts of characters making use of expression in your voice to highlight different character traits. This will help your child to read more expressively.

Remember that reading should be enjoyable. As soon as your child is not enjoying it, stop.

Encourage your child to read in 'play' situations such as reading to 'Teddy' or dolls.

It is not only books that help your child to read.

- **At breakfast time** - Look at the words on cereal packets, milk and fruit juice cartons. Get them to see how many words they can make out of the letters.
- **Going to the shops** - Some shops still have a sign over the door that says what they sell. Can your child put the words together with what's in the window?
- **Look in the papers** - If your child recognises a famous face, e.g. a football or TV star, it will make them want to read the story.
- **In the streets** - You'll see advertising posters and place names.
- **In the shops** - Your child can help you to find things in the supermarket by reading what's in each aisle.
- **Videos** - Video boxes usually tell you the story. Get your child to read the box as well as watching the film.
- **On a bus or train trip** - Place names on the front of the bus or train, posters inside.
- **Looking at holiday brochures** - Help your child to read about other places.
- **Looking at catalogues** - Let your child help with choosing clothes, presents, etc.
- **Unpacking the shopping** - Your child can read the words on your groceries while helping to put them away.
- **CDs and tapes** - Your child will find it easier to follow the words if they can hear them at the same time.
- **Computers** - Using the keyboard will help your child become familiar with letters, and they will enjoy following instructions for simple games.

How can I help with writing?

There are lots of ways in which you can help your child to write:

- Help them to make their own labels, notices, cards and books.
- Encourage your child to say what they are going to write first before writing it down.
- Write a story that your child has told you. They can learn from watching you write and can help by suggesting letters and spellings.
- Show that you can make mistakes and start again.
- Encourage different kinds of writing such as lists, notes, letters, stories, instructions, diaries, addresses, etc.
- If they want to write a story, help them to think of what it's about, what happens and how it ends. Ask questions about the characters. Ask them to describe to you the place where the story is set.
- Help them to sequence stories they know in pictures. This will help with reinforcing the structure of stories for their own writing.
- Make sure that they have access to a dictionary which they can use. There are lots of simple dictionaries available.

How can I encourage my child to write?

Your child needs to discover that writing can be enjoyable so don't make them write if they don't want to. They also need to see that writing is useful so provide different reasons for writing. You can do these in a variety of ways:

Create a 'writing area' with perhaps a small table or desk and chair and a noticeboard for displaying writing. Providing different types of paper, envelopes, an old diary, notebooks, crayons, coloured pencils and pens will help your child to see writing as a fun activity.

As well as 'play' activities such as 'shops', 'doctor', 'hairdresser', etc. Make the most of real opportunities for writing such as lists and invitations to a birthday party, thank you letters, holiday postcards, a diary of a holiday for Grandpa, etc.

Write messages to each other such as 'Would you like to go swimming at the weekend?' 'What would you like in your lunch box tomorrow?' Sometimes you can write to one another in role as favourite book or TV characters. Keep a diary for 'Teddy' or the cat. Write secret messages in code or riddles.

Make books together about topics which interest them.

Praise all writing efforts and respond to the message rather than drawing attention to errors in spelling or with missing words.

Show that you value their writing by displaying it somewhere prominently.

How can I help with spelling?

Don't worry about spelling. If your child is writing for you, read, or let them read to you what they have written. It is the message which is important. You can help with spelling in a variety of ways:

- Spell out words with fridge magnets, or letter tiles from word games. Take some letters out and get your child to put the correct letters in the right places.
- Play games with lists of words: play odd one out like, big, pig, dog, wig, fig; play sorting into alphabetical order by the first letter of each word, then, later by the second letter, e.g. bag, beg, big, bug,
- Draw or cut out pictures of objects which have only one letter different like 'pen' and 'pin' to help them to get used to how different vowels work.
- Look for words inside of words, e.g. 'car' and 'pet' in 'carpet', or 'shop', 'hop' and 'ping' in 'shopping'.
- Use old newspapers and magazines to play word finding games, e.g. get them to highlight or circle words with 'ing', 'ed' or 'th' in them.
- Help your child to see that they already know the biggest part of words like play-ing, eat-en, walk-ed, by breaking the word down. If they read or write the part they know you can finish it letter by letter.
- Help with longer words by clapping along together or by counting out the syllables, e.g. tram-po-line, all-i-ga-tor. Write out long words and cut them into bite-sized pieces. Play games putting them back together again.
- When your child asks you for a spelling, write it down so that they can see it rather than call it out letter by letter. If they see it they are more likely to remember it. Focus on the particular part of the word which is causing difficulty. Encourage your child to look at the whole word and then write it rather than copying it letter by letter.
- Encourage 'having a go' at spelling for themselves.
- Help them to use a simple picture dictionary.
- Don't worry if your child crosses out when they are writing. Lots of children try out different spellings until they feel a word looks right. Encourage them to try out words on scrap paper. Praise any correct use of letters in a word, for instance if they have written 'we' for 'went', the only part of the word to be learnt is 'nt'.
- As you read to/with your child comment on long words, short words, interesting words and the special features of these words, but not to the detriment of the flow of the story.
- In your child's writing, praise the correct spellings, however few, and don't overcorrect incorrect spellings or your child may give up and stop writing.