

Celebrate what the writing says rather than focusing on errors. If a tricky word has been used in an interesting way, this should be praised even if it is spelled wrongly. Remember, it is difficult to get everything right when you are learning!

Let them write part of shopping lists and then be responsible for carrying the list and finding certain items.

After making a cake, doing a craft activity or playing a game, challenge them to write instructions for someone else to follow. Make up fun ways to remember how to spell difficult words. For example, the word, *because*, - Big Elephants Can Always Understand Small Elephants (because), *what* has a hat (what), *when* has a hen (when).

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 practise 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. 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 - praise where possible, but please do not mark it or encourage parent-led detailed editing!

From time to time ask your child what his/her writing targets are and help them work specifically on these.

Read books with and to them that are at a higher level than their own reading, this exposes them to more ambitious vocabulary and complex sentence structures.

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.

Have fun learning together!



Helping to Improve Your Child's Writing

Every aspect of your child's life involves reading and writing, and while children do many literacy based activities at school (e.g. writing, reading, handwriting, phonics), there are numerous ways that you can support your child at home. This booklet gives numerous suggestions and ideas for making writing fun and meaningful at home and thus improving achievement levels at school.

General Tips and Ideas

The basis of all good writing is good talk. Writing depends on knowing lots of words and being able to join them together in interesting ways, and talking does just that.

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, their day at school - encourage detail
- ask them to 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, for example: 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: 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 selection of writing materials available: a range of pencils, pens, coloured crayons and any other materials that could be used for writing.

Praise your child for trying and do not dwell on mistakes.

Focus on content and enjoyment of writing for fun and for purpose.

Encouraging Reluctant Writers

Praising and valuing your child's writing is very important. Your child may need support when they write and it will help if you to talk through their ideas first and help them 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 - consider being trapped

into writing 'big' when you really wanted to write 'enormous'

Encourage your child 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.

Beginning Writers

Encourage looking at print on road signs, food packets, in books, magazines and catalogues. Go to the library read and re-read favourite books - 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. Make handwriting interesting – practise drawing letters in sand, water, or paint, use white boards, playdough, pastry or shaving foam.

Use magnetic letters and make small words together. Leave a message on the fridge door and encourage your child to reply. Praise early writing attempts - squiggles and marks show that your child is beginning to understand writing.

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 them 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.

More Confident Writers

Continue talking about experiences, this remains the key to good writing. Talk about what has been seen, heard, smelled, 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.)

Create silly sentences or tongue twisters using alliteration (a group of words that all begin with the same sound - Sad Sid slipped on Sam's salad sandwich). Encourage your child to rehearse their sentence out loud before they write it down. Do encourage children to punctuate their sentences with a capital letter at the start and a full stop at the end.

As with beginning 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 e-safety).

Write information pages or booklets about a hobby or something they find interesting e.g., dinosaurs, class topics, sports stars etc., illustrate and label them. Encourage use of paragraphs for blocks of information.