

How to help your child with writing

Writing is important. It helps children communicate their thoughts, process their emotions and spark their imaginations! Children learn writing best when it is fun and purposeful.

However, writing is complicated: there are many aspects to think about, such as...

To write a message, children need to think about:

- what they want to say
- how to organise their words into phrases or sentences
- how to represent the sounds in words with letters or combinations of letters
- how to form the letters (see 'How to help your child with handwriting' for more information about forming letters)

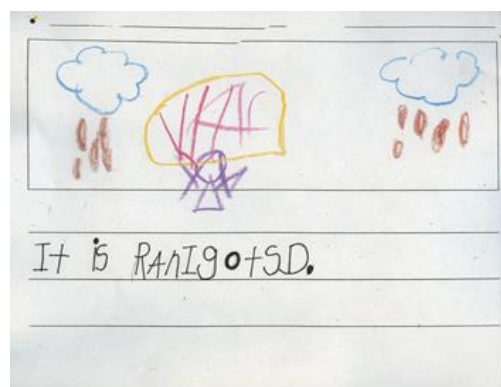


Children begin writing by making marks which progress to symbols, which look a bit like letters. They often start with the letters in their name as these are familiar to them. Next they learn to represent the sounds in words with letters or combinations of letters. This is called segmenting to spell and children learn this alongside blending to read.

Some words don't follow spelling rules and need to be learnt as whole words. We call these 'tricky words'. Children learn that the word 'I' is always written as a capital letter in English. They learn that words are separate units of meaning and that we leave spaces between them to make writing easier to read.

As children learn more about writing they begin to learn what a sentence is and how to show this by using a capital letter at the start of the first word and a full stop at the end.

At school we encourage children to talk about what they are going to write and begin to plan their writing. We also remind them to check and edit their writing when they finish.



Here are some ways you can help your child to become a writer:

- *Let your child see you writing at home e.g. a shopping list, a message in a birthday card, a reminder on a post-it note, an email*
- *Display messages on a family noticeboard, including those written by your child*
- *Have a box of writing materials available for your child to use at home. You could put in pens, colouring pencils, notepads, post-it notes, mini whiteboards and pens etc.*
- *Have an alphabet handy so children can check what each letter looks like*
- *Make a book and add pictures and labels*
- *Write birthday cards or cards for a festival you are celebrating*
- *Follow your child's interests: encourage them to write about their favourite sport, toy, book, place to visit etc.*

Here are some more helpful tips about writing:

- *Talk to your child about their writing and help them plan what to write, thinking about who the writing is for and what form it should take e.g. a letter, a list, a story, some information*
- *Always praise your child for their writing and look for the things they have done well.*
- *Remember spelling in English is tricky and always encourage them to 'have a go' at writing the sounds they can hear in a word.*
- *If you notice them regularly spelling a common word (e.g. the, with, went) incorrectly, show them how it should look so they can begin to learn the correct spelling.*
- *Remember we use lower case letters for writing and capital letters are only used for the start of a sentence, for the word 'I' and for names.*

Don't forget the more words your child knows, the better writer they will be. Listen to your child and talk with them. The more topics you talk about, the more new words they will encounter. Explain what new words mean and use them in a sentence to make this clearer.

Finally, good writers are usually good readers too. Support your child as they learn to read and encourage them to read widely- all reading is good reading! Most importantly, read to your child regularly. This enables them to hear and understand more complex language patterns and vocabulary at a higher level than they can read by themselves. This will help them when they're writing too.

Have fun writing!

