

How Can You Help Your Child

Reading at home – it all begins with reading. Building up reading stamina and supporting skimming and scanning strategies over time will build up their confidence.

Reading at home

- Get your child to tell you about what they are reading. Who is their favourite character and why? Is there anyone like that in your family? What do they think is going to happen? What have they learnt from their reading? Does it remind them of any of their own experiences?
- Help your child with any words they don't understand – look them up together in the dictionary if you need to.
- Ask your child what they are reading and talk about their ideas: What is the 'picture' they have of particular characters? Are there people like that in your family? What do they want to find out from the book? What are the important messages? What do they think is going to happen next? What else do they need to know to understand the story or topic?
- Talk about books on similar topics. This helps your child to pull together ideas from different places.
- Talk about different types of stories that are read or spoken. Newspaper articles, internet sites, comics, bible stories, songs or novels will each have different points you can talk about together. Find a newspaper article you're both interested in and talk about what it means to each of you.
- Help your child to share their thinking. Get them to share opinions and talk about why they think that. Listen, even when you don't agree with their ideas.

Read together

- If your child has chosen something to read that is too hard at the moment, take turns and read it together.
- Find out information together from different places. For example, manuals, dictionaries, the internet, magazines, television guides, atlases, family tree information.
- Play games that involve reading in a fun way.
- Encourage your child to read to others.
- Younger brothers and sisters or grandparents are great audiences for practising smooth and interesting reading out loud.
- Visit the library regularly. Help your child choose books they're interested in (about hobbies, interests or who they are and where they come from) or encourage them to get books out that are about what they are studying at school. They may need you to help by reading to them as well.
- Find books of movies or TV programmes. It can help your child to learn different ways to tell the same story if they read the 'stories' they have watched.

When they are reading, the most common difficulty your child is likely to have is working out the meaning of new words, phrases and expressions. To do this your child will use their knowledge of words and word patterns (e.g. prefixes, suffixes and root words) to help build meaning. You may need to remind your child to read back and forward for clues to help their understanding of what they are reading. Talk with your child about the meaning.

Be a reader yourself

- Talk about what you are reading and why you are enjoying it or what is challenging about it. Read a book to your child that they might find difficult but want to read, and talk about it as you read. Use your first language whenever you can – it can help your child’s learning.
- Read the same book or magazine as your child. You can then share your ideas about what you have read. You could talk about why the authors made the choices they did when writing the story.

Take your child to the library

- Help your child to choose a variety of books they want to read.
- Help them look for books about topics they’re learning about at school.
- Get your child to choose a book that you can read to them (listening to you read helps them with their reading).
- Encourage your child to retell favourite stories or parts of stories in their own words.

Here’s a tip – help your child link stories in their own life. Remind them about what they have done when a similar thing happens in the story.

Writing at home – You can help your child immensely by:

Writing for fun

- Writing about their heroes, sports events, ancestors, hobbies and interests helps your child to stay interested in what they are writing about.
- Help your child to leave messages in sand on the beach, send a message in a bottle, do code crackers, word puzzles, crosswords, word finds – these are all fun to do together.
- Make up a story or think of a legend and act it out with costumes and music. Write down the names of the characters.
- If you or someone in your family has a computer, encourage your child to use it to write, email and publish or print for pleasure (emails, birthday cards, poems, jokes, letters, pictures with captions). Or you could use a computer at a library.
- Help your child write about their heroes, sports events, ancestors, hobbies and interests. This helps them stay interested in what they are writing about.
- Play word games and do puzzles together to help your child learn more about words and spelling.
- Have interesting paper and pens available or help them make a special book to write in.
- Write to your child, or give them jokes, cartoons or short articles you think they’ll like to read from the newspaper.
- Play with words. Thinking of interesting words and discussing new ones can help increase the words your child uses when they write – look words up in the dictionary or on the internet, or talk to family to learn more about the background and origins of the words.

Here’s a tip – keep writing fun and use any excuse you can think of to encourage your child to write about anything, any time.

Talk about your child's writing with them:

- Get your child to talk about their writing and share it.
- Cut out words and letters to make stories, codes, poems, puzzles and more.
- Play word games together.
- Play with words. Thinking of interesting words and discussing new ones can help increase the words your child uses when they write – look words up in the dictionary or on the internet or talk with family to find out more about where the words come from.
- Talk about ideas and information they are going to write about. Talk about experiences, diagrams, graphs, pictures, photos and material that your child is planning to use for school work. Discussing the information and main ideas can help their planning for writing and their understanding too.
- Share enjoyment of their writing. Read and talk about the writing that your child does. Give praise for things they have done well to support their learning.
- Play with words. Thinking of interesting words and discussing new ones can help increase the words your child uses when they write.
- Share your own writing with your child – lists, planning for family events or an email. You can help them to see that you too use writing for different purposes.

Write for a reason

- Encourage your child to write emails, invitations, thank you letters, poems, stories or postcards to friends and family – make it fun.
- Ask your child who they would like to write to. It is helpful if what they write is given or sent to others.
- Ask them to write a story to read to a younger sibling.
- A diary or journal – on paper or on a computer – can help your child to write about their experiences and their own feelings about things that have happened at school, at home, in the world, at sports events and on TV.

