



Things to try with your child

Sharing reading

1. It's still good to share

Don't give up on talking about picture books with your child and sharing that bedtime story or information book. It's just as important now to enjoy reading these books together, as well as those that come home from school, to help develop your child's vocabulary, their understanding of stories and to encourage a love of reading.

2. Read with expression

Read with expression when reading to your child. Use different voices and vary the volume for effect or for different bits of information such as, *Did you know that the Tyrannosaurus Rex...? Wow!* You'll soon see that your child will then try these skills when reading to you!

3. Talk about books, words and pictures

Before reading a book together, always talk about the title, the pictures and the information on the cover (front and back). If it's new, ask what your child thinks the book might be about. If it's an old favourite then talk about the bits you love most! Don't worry if some books get chosen again and again!

4. Retell stories or events

When reading aloud use lots of expression and try different voices for different characters. Get your child to join in with bits too, such as, *'They pulled and they pulled!'* and *'Fee, fi, fo, fom...'*. See if your child can copy you!

Practising early reading skills

1. Listen to your child read

Books that your child brings home from school should be at the right level for your child. The words should be readable for your child – we say they are levelled reading scheme books. They are written to ensure steady progress and success. Many of these books include helpful notes for parents inside the front cover.

2. Sound it out

If your child gets stuck on a word, try [phonics](#) first. Get your child to say the letter sounds and say them quickly to try to hear the word; this is called [blending](#) . If the word can't be sounded out then it's best if you say it quickly and move on. If the book is at the right level then this should not happen too much.

3. Clap and chunk

Clapping out syllables or chunks in words and names can help with reading longer words: *Di-no-saur!* *Cho-co-late!* Or point out that some words are made up of two words, so *wind* and then *mill* makes *windmill* .

4. Try expression and flow

Your child's expression might sometimes sound stilted on the first read of a sentence or a page. This is because they are focusing on making sounds into words. To keep your child hooked into the story, read it again with expression – after lots of praise, of course!

5. Don't be afraid to back track

It's sometimes good to get your child to re-read a sentence or even a page if it has been tricky to work out. This helps with meaning, flow and confidence – we all still have to do this sometimes!

6. Read, read, read!

It's really important to read as much as possible with your child. Read the books that come home from school, borrow library books, buy books and magazines. Read signs and notices, and find interesting websites to read. And keep reading together at bedtime too!



Ideas for writing

1. Provide opportunities

Let the children see you writing for lots of different purposes, for example, writing a shopping list, note, birthday card message, letter, invitation. Perhaps they could help you by having a go at writing some of the words/sentences. Make it fun by pretending you can't remember how to spell something!

2. It doesn't have to be right!

Encourage the children to try their best when sounding out but remember it doesn't have to be spelt properly. At this stage we are encouraging the children to have a really good go at sounding out using Fred Talk and writing the sounds they hear. So if, for example, they write 'I went for a walk on the trayl', they should be praised for including the 'ay' sound even though it isn't the correct one. You may wish to correct some words but don't overload them by correcting all the ones they get wrong.

3. Let them draw first

At this age, some of the best ideas for writing can come from pictures the children have seen or drawn themselves. You could ask them to draw their favourite character or even make up a new character and write about it.

4. Scribe

Sometimes children struggle to get their ideas down on paper so it's ok to help them. They can dictate their sentences/ideas to you for you to write down. This is a good opportunity to model writing and again the children can 'help' with any words you may be struggling with. Working together in this way can take away any stress they may be feeling towards writing and make it a fun activity.

5. Fine Motor Skills

Strengthening finger muscles supports children to be able to use pens and pencils effectively for writing and there are lots of activities you can do to exercise these muscles. Activities include manipulating malleable materials, such as play dough; working creatively with scissors, hole punches and staplers; playing with commercial construction kits, such as lego and sticklebricks; weaving, sewing and threading and picking up and sorting, with fingers or tweezers, collections of pasta, beads and sequins.

6. Handwriting

If your child is keen to practise their letter formation remember the correct way to form each letter is shown on the back of the letter cards in the children's reading bags. They can practise the letters on a large scale using chunky outdoor chalks or large paintbrushes dipped in water.

7. Create a special place for writing.

Provide a special place for children to write, this could be a small table or desk. A collection of resources such as scrap paper (lined, coloured or plain), used greeting cards, crayons, a variety of pens, mail order forms, envelopes and little note books will encourage children to experiment with writing.