



REMAIN WRITING AT HOME

SOME PRACTICAL GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT FOR PARENTS, CARERS AND FAMILIES



“Our task regarding creativity is to help children climb their own mountains. As high as possible. No one can do more.”

- Loris Malaguzzi

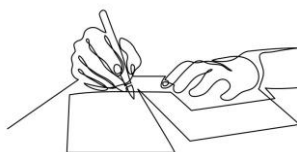
Times just now are tough for all of us and we are all finding ourselves in unprecedented situations. It can be difficult to comprehend what the coming weeks and months will look like. In the meantime, this booklet is intended to provide some practical guidance when supporting your child, or children, to keep engaging in the writing process at home.

Writing is a fundamental skill we need for daily tasks or as part of a job, but it is not a natural skill. We are not simply born ‘good’ or ‘bad at writing’. It requires a lot of learning, resilience and experience. The more we engage with texts and apply what we learn about the written form, the more confident and effective we become in accessing and using language.

Providing opportunities for your child to write while these current measures continue is key to supporting their ongoing learning and development. This has huge benefits for their life, learning and work.

Included in this booklet are some suggestions to help you promote and support positive writing experiences in your home during this difficult time.

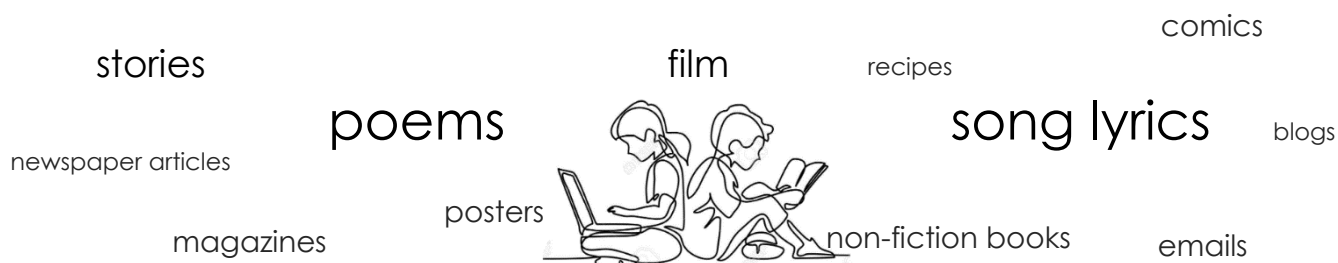
STAY HOME. STAY SAFE. REMAIN WRITING.



PREPARING FOR WRITING

Encourage your child to read/engage with different types of text.

Before we can expect children and young people to create text, we need to equip them with an understanding of why different texts exist and how they are most effectively formed. Try to look at lots of different types of text with your child.



Encourage your child to identify the key features of different texts.

Help your child 'notice' the key features of a text. For example, you could point out:

- The use of verbs to open sentences in instructions e.g. "Put... Slice... Pour..."
Verbs are 'doing' words so using them in instructional writing is important as these tell people exactly what to do, ensuring something is done correctly and/or effectively.
- The use of repetition in songs e.g. "Baby Shark doo, doo, doo, doo, doo, doo..."
Repetition in songs helps to quickly familiarise people with the words and the tune meaning they are more likely to recall it, enjoy singing it and download it making money for the artist. According to reports, the song 'Baby Shark' has made around \$125 million!
- The use of rhetorical questions in adverts e.g. "Are you tired of the same old lunches?"
Rhetorical questions get people to think, often about a situation that may be negative or unappealing. Advertisers use them to engage a listener or viewer and encourage them to see their product as a desirable alternative.

Encourage your child to talk about the text.

Talk with your child about *how* the key features of a text type have helped to achieve its purpose. Remember that when creating any text, an author will have made specific choices and decisions. Sometimes, these are very effective but not always! Encourage your child to share their opinions and perspectives on the text. Try asking the following questions*:



"What do you think the purpose of this text is? Why was it created?"



"What do you think the author wants you to think, feel or know?"



"What do you notice about the way the text has been organised?"



"What do you notice about the language that has been used?"

*based on ideas in James Clements (2019) *Teaching English by the Book: Putting Literature at the Heart of the Primary Curriculum*

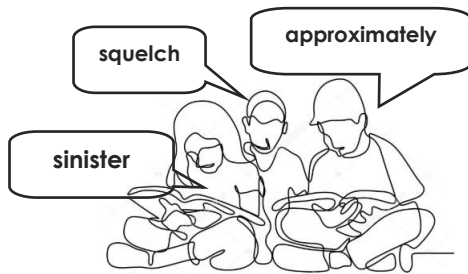
Encourage your child to record interesting words.

It can be useful to think of the words we use in three categories, or 'tiers'.

Tier one words would include the most basic language e.g. *house, walked, hot*.

Tier two vocabulary can be thought of as a more sophisticated level of language which help us to be more specific. If we consider the same examples above, tier two alternatives could be *apartment, strolled, blazing*.

Tier three vocabulary is usually very precise, often related to a particular context and used much less frequently than in everyday language or situations e.g. *duplex, sashayed, molten*.



Developing your child's vocabulary gives them a wider range of words to express themselves when writing. Research shows that focusing on tier two level words with your child is one of the most helpful ways to help them develop their knowledge, understanding and use of language.

Talk to your child about the words they come across and find interesting when reading, listening to or watching texts. The words might be interesting because they are particularly descriptive, or your child might just like the way the word sounds!

Words and terminology that are specific to a text type are also useful to highlight. You could encourage your child to write these down somewhere e.g. a bookmark, notebook or make a poster. Illustrating these or using them in sentences of their own is a good way for them to build their understanding.

Encourage your child to talk about how they would adapt a text.

Children can disengage with writing if they view it as a chore or find little personal purpose or value in it. Helping your child to develop a positive attitude towards writing is crucial and can be best supported by exploring different types of text first, before asking them to put pencil to paper, or fingertips to a keyboard.

Once they have read and discussed a text, your child will be far better equipped to share their own views about how to improve it or use their understanding as a framework to pursue their own ideas or interests.

Get them to consider a text they have already engaged with. By reflecting on what they liked and disliked, encourage them to consider certain elements. Perhaps they could replace some of the words with alternatives, or have ideas for a more creative or engaging layout?



It is so important to start small, particularly if you find your child does not show much interest in writing or finds the process challenging. Discuss their ideas with them but do not insist these are written down – yet! You can always work up to them giving this a go.

Encourage your child to write through games.

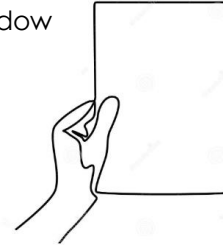
For a non-threatening and fun way to encourage your child to put pencil to paper, try playing word/letter games e.g.

- | | | | |
|---------------|------------|--------------|-----------|
| Pictionary | anagrams | Hangman | Boggle |
| Scattergories | Scrabble | BINGO | quizzes |
| | crosswords | | Countdown |

Encourage your child to establish a purpose for their own text.

Establishing a purpose for writing that is meaningful to your child will help them to engage more positively in the process. It is important that children at all stages write for a relevant purpose and have a real audience to share their text with. In the current circumstances, we have to think more creatively than ever about this. Some examples could be:

- A poster displaying a positive quote or message to display in their window
- A song/poem about daily life in lockdown
- A letter/email to their teacher, a friend or family member
- A playscript for their favourite movie
- A diary to keep a record of their experiences in lockdown
- A healthy workout and exercise plan
- A quiz for their friends or family to take part in
- An imaginative story based on their favourite character
- A favourite recipe to share with loved ones <https://www.tesco.com/zones/food-love-stories>
(other supermarkets are available!)



Encourage your child to refer to models or examples.

Once your child has identified the kind of text they want to create, encourage them to look at examples of the text type and collect any useful words or phrases. There are examples of lots of different types of text available to view online, e.g. <https://www.literacywagoll.com/>. The term 'WAGOLL' stands for 'What a Good One Looks Like'. This collection of resources should be useful to refer to and help your child consider what to include in their own text.

Encourage your child to plan their writing.

We don't always need to plan when creating text, but it can help draw your child's attention to aspects they will need to consider such as their ideas, choice of language and layout. There are different ways for your child to make a plan to help them.

They could:



- talk about their ideas
- draw a layout to help organise information
- draw pictures
- create a spider diagram or mind map
- sort ideas, words and information from texts they have engaged with
- write a list of their own ideas or words
- use a template

With each of the planning ideas suggested, discuss what might be most helpful for your child. Bear in mind that some ways of planning are more suitable for particular types of text.

Encourage your child to engage in writing for a set time.

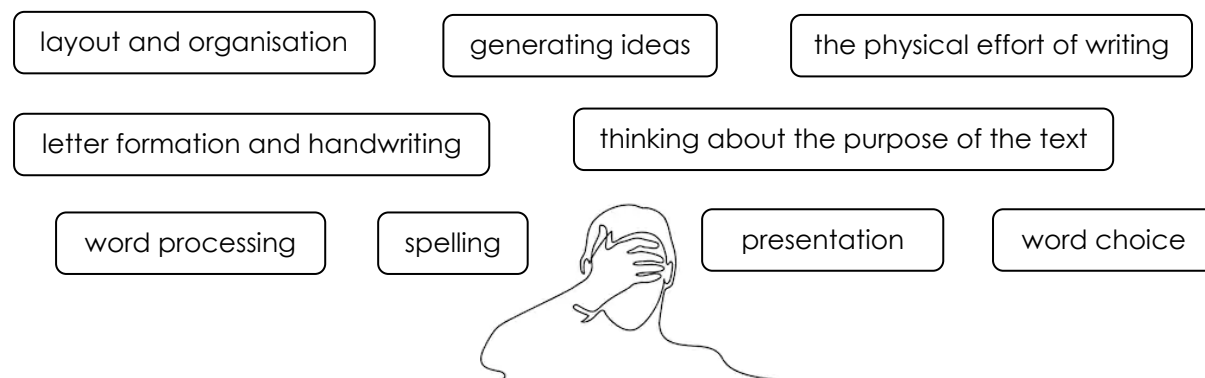
- Try agreeing a time limit with your child for them to engage in some writing every day.
- It *may* help to set a specific 'writing time' every day but this may feel too restrictive.
- Discuss what you feel is realistic and achievable.
- Bear in mind that every day will be different.
- Keep writing sessions short to maintain their focus.
- Be responsive to how they are feeling and don't force it.



THE WRITING PROCESS

Encourage your child to identify what is challenging for them.

Writing is hard. It is a complex process that requires us to attend to many different aspects, often at the same time. If you find your child is reluctant to write, or starts to show signs of frustration, it is likely they are struggling with one, or more, of these aspects:



It is important to show your understanding that writing is difficult for them. Reassure them that they are not 'bad' at writing and praise all efforts. This will help your child to feel less threatened or overwhelmed by the process. Talk to your child about what they are finding tricky. For each aspect, see some suggested ways to support them to overcome any barriers.

Thinking About the Purpose of the Text

- Encourage your child to focus on **why** they are creating their text.
- Encourage your child to focus on **who** their text is for. Who will read, listen to or watch it?
- Encourage your child to focus on **what** they want their audience to think, know or feel.

By reflecting on these questions, encourage your child to make decisions about how they can best do this e.g. If they want to make someone laugh, what kinds of words will make it funny? If they want people to see it from the street, how will they make it stand out?

Layout and Organisation

- Encourage your child to look at some more examples of the text type. Draw their attention to how the text has been set out or organisational features that have been used e.g. headings, subheadings, pictures, diagrams.

• Search for images of text templates online or use them in apps like Microsoft Word. Templates can be accessed in the "New Document" tab, located under "File".

• For helpful ideas about how to organise information in different types of text, see <https://www.literacyideas.com/types-of-writing>

Presentation

• If word processing, there are free title/heading generators like <https://cooltext.com/> or websites which offer a variety of different fonts <https://www.fontspace.com/popular/fonts> that are free to download. Talk to your child about what fonts or graphics might be most effective for their text type. Could they copy a font style if writing text by hand?

• Encourage your child to redraft a piece of writing and focus on how their audience will engage with it e.g. "Is it clear to read? Are the images relevant?"

Generating Ideas

- Encourage your child to gather more information on the topic.
- Offer different suggestions for what your child could write. Help them to see that the writing process involves putting all your ideas down then selecting and combining these.
- Using a randomised generator for characters, settings, plots or words can be a fun and motivating way to help your child think up ideas. There are many available online such as <https://www.plot-generator.org.uk/> or <https://writingexercises.co.uk/children/index.php>
- Thinking up their own ideas for writing can be difficult so if this is causing the issue why not try encouraging them to write out the lyrics of their favourite song, sentences from a story, or the instructions for a recipe. They could then create their own title, illustrations or a border. They will still benefit from the writing practice, even if it isn't a completely original text.



Word Choice

- Encourage your child to look at examples of the text type. Are there any really good words or phrases that they can 'maggie'? (*based on ideas by **Pie Corbett (2020) Talk 4 Writing** <https://www.talk4writing.co.uk/>)
- Encourage your child to think of alternatives for some basic words (e.g. hot, big, nice) to develop their vocabulary and use of language. If word processing, select a word, hold SHIFT (↑) and click F7. A range of alternatives are then available for them to choose from the thesaurus. Remember that not all of these options may suit the context so help them to select the most effective by talking about the differences in the word meanings. Sometimes there is no need to change the basic word as this may be perfectly appropriate. However, exposing your child to similar words is still worthwhile and will help to extend their use of language.
- Dictate sentences to your child and ask them to write these down. Leave a word missing from your sentence e.g. "Tyrannosaurus Rex was one of the most [something] dinosaurs that ever lived." Ask them to think of as many different words as they can to fit the sentence or give them some choices. Discuss their word choice with them. "Why is this most effective?"

Letter Formation and Handwriting



We may use technology more frequently in our daily lives, but handwriting is still an important skill. Though it is entirely personal to us, we must help our children to develop a handwriting style that is both fluent and legible. Mastering the formation of letters involves two very important skills: forming anticlockwise circles and forming crosses.

- Try playing a game of noughts and crosses to see how well your child forms these shapes. The ability to make these shapes is necessary for forming letters.
- Children should know, and practice, how to form letters correctly. Online demonstrations and activities e.g. <https://www.doorwayonline.org.uk/activities/letterformation/> can help.
- It is important to familiarise yourself with the correct letter formation patterns to help you support your child to do this appropriately. Encourage them to follow the standard letter formation pattern as this will help with their fluency. If they have developed an incorrect way to form letters, this can slow them down when writing and make the whole process frustrating and laborious. For some further information about handwriting and how to support this see <https://home.oxfordowl.co.uk/english/primary-handwriting/>

Word Processing

- Word processing apps can help children easily make edits, correct mistakes and provide support with spelling and grammar. There are many great websites which support children to develop touch typing skills through engaging activities and games. Here are a few you might want to encourage them to try:



<https://www.typingclub.com/>

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/topics/zf2f9j6/articles/z3c6tfr>

<https://www.typing.com/student/games>

Spelling

- High frequency words are those that appear most often in any type of text your child is likely to have to read or write. It is essential that they can both recognise and write these quickly, correctly and without difficulty. This will help them concentrate their effort on other words. There are lots of online games which can support their practice of these, including:

<https://www.teachyourmonstertoread.com/teachers-area/classroom-toolkit/high-frequency-sight-words>

<https://www.ictgames.com/mobilePage/literacy.html>

https://www.spellzone.com/word_lists/games-4901.htm

The First 100 High Frequency Words*

the of and a to in is you that it he was for on are as with his they I at be this
have from or one had by words but not what all were we when your can said
there use an each which she do how their if will up other about out many
then them these so some her would make like him into time has look two
more write go see number no way could people my than first water been
called who am its now find long down day did get come made may part

The Second 100 High Frequency Words*

over new sound take only little work know place years live me back give most
very after thing our just name good sentence man think say great where help
through much before line right means old any same tell boy following came
want show also around farm three small set put end does another well large
must big even such because turn here why asked went men read need land
different should home us learn move try America kind hand picture again
change off play spell air away house point page too letters world mother
answer found study still animals

*taken from Dr. Edward Fry (1957) High Frequency Word Lists

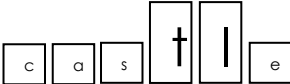
- If your child is confident reading and writing the words in these lists, have a look at the others available at <https://sightwords.com/sight-words/fry/#lists> to help you find their level.

Effective spellers:

- use a variety of spelling strategies to spell and learn new words
- automatically recall high-frequency words
- continually build their vocabulary
- understand that the English language is complicated and see spelling as 'problem solving'
- apply spelling patterns and rules they have learned
- try out alternative spellings to help them recognise what looks 'right'

Remember that children progress through stages of spelling development at different rates. Young children will naturally be less accurate spellers. However, as they continue to learn more about the rules and complexities of the English language, they should begin to show more confidence and accuracy in their spelling ability. This comes with time and experience. To help your child become a *more* accurate speller, try some of the suggested prompts in the table below. Let's take the example that your child wants to write the word 'castle'.

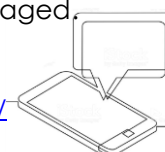
Consider where they might be in their spelling development to help you decide which prompts may best support them at home.

Less Accurate		More Accurate
<p>Focus on spelling the word based on the obvious sounds they can hear i.e.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">/k/ - /a/ - /s/ - /l/</p> <p>Recording the number of sounds they can hear as they say the word aloud can help with this e.g. use counters, clap hands or draw boxes</p> <p style="text-align: center;">□ □ □ □</p> <p>Selecting letters from an alphabet strip, or using cut out letters, can help your child match these to the sounds.</p> <p>Encourage your child to practice forming the letters and write the word themselves.</p> <p>Give lots of praise for their effort in using their sound-letter knowledge to help them.</p> <p>Show them the correct spelling of the word but do not insist they go back and change how they have written it ... yet!</p> <p>Point out the word in texts they are reading, when this is appropriate.</p>	<p>Focus on spelling the word based on the obvious sounds they can hear first i.e.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">/k/ - /a/ - /s/ - /l/</p> <p>Show them the correct spelling of the word. Get them to compare and talk about what they notice.</p> <p>Draw their attention to any spelling patterns or rules e.g. "The final sound in castle is /l/ and has been spelled using 'le'. 'Castle' ends like 'table', 'puddle' or 'little'. How would you spell these words? Would any other words follow this rule do you think?"</p> <p>Help them to visualise the shape of the word by drawing boxes around it.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">  </p> <p>Help them remember the spelling by focusing on the tricky part and saying it how it looks i.e. "cas t le"</p> <p>Help them remember by creating their own mnemonic e.g. "castles - come and see they look enormous!"</p> <p>Encourage your child to use the correct spelling of the word.</p>	<p>Focus on spelling words based on their greater experience of language.</p> <p>Ask "How do you think you spell it?" Ask if the word looks 'right' to them.</p> <p>Ask "Could you try some alternative ways to spell the word?" Do they recognise which one 'looks right'?</p> <p>Encourage them to apply their understanding of spelling patterns or rules e.g. "The final sound in castle is /l/ like 'table', 'puddle' or 'little'. How do you spell these words?" Can they use this to help them work it out?</p> <p>Encourage them to find the correct spelling using a dictionary or spell checker.</p> <p>Encourage your child to identify the word in texts they are reading, when this is appropriate.</p> <p>Encourage your child to spell the word correctly and to see spelling as important, particularly when editing a piece of writing.</p>

- Your child may find it interesting to find out about word origins. There are often clues to the spelling, and meaning, of a word in its origin, e.g. 'automatic', 'autopilot', 'autobiography' all come from the Greek word 'auto' for 'self'. Encourage your child to create word lists and challenge them to think of as many words as they can that use that spelling.
- Your child may want to explore these further online or access games and activities to help deepen their understanding such as <https://www.funbrain.com/games/rooting-out-words>

The Physical Effort of Writing

- Encourage your child to take a turn. Children of all ages benefit from shared writing activities and having someone model the writing process to them. Try taking turns with your child when creating text. This can help to prevent them from becoming disengaged.
- Encourage your child to use online speech-to-text software such as <https://dictation.io/speech>, <https://www.speechtexter.com/> or <https://speechnotes.co/>
- Engage in some fine motor skills activities to help them develop and strengthen the muscles required to write for more sustained periods. There are so many activity ideas available online e.g. <https://mylittlelearner.co.uk/blogs/blog/activities-for-fine-motor-skills> Promote opportunities for your child to scribble, draw, colour in or play with small manipulative toys.



Encourage your child but don't force it!

- It is so important to make their writing experience an enjoyable time rather than a chore. If you find your child is becoming disengaged, restless or showing signs of distress then stop.
- Talk with them about why they might be feeling the way they are. Consider their understanding of the type of text, time of day or environmental factors. What could you try differently the next time to improve things?

Encourage your child to share their writing.

It is so important for children and young people to share their writing with their intended audience. This can help support a feeling of accomplishment and validate their effort.



Encourage your child to develop an interest in creative writing.

- Check out these inspiring top tips from famous authors. https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLB5TN0ac12P_jnWINGyDq530oB3GYmrMw
- Check out these ideas your child could use to help them when writing their own story. <https://home.oxfordowl.co.uk/kids-activities/creative-writing/>
- Check out these writing prompts which encourage a creative response. <https://thinkwritten.com/365-creative-writing-prompts/>

Encourage your child to enter a competition.

Having their own piece of writing published can be a hugely motivating and rewarding experience for your child. Encourage them to read through the past winners' published entries so they get an idea of what the contest or publication is looking for. There are so many current competitions available for them to enter. A curated list of these can be found at <https://schoolreadinglist.co.uk/competitions-for-children/childrens-writing-competitions/>

Encourage your child to see the value of writing.

Help your child to see the importance of writing as a life skill by drawing their attention to it as much as possible in daily life e.g.



- Writing emails or letters
- Filling in forms
- Writing lists
- Making notes
- Writing cards

Encourage your child to develop a positive attitude to learning.

Praise the effort* made by your child when engaging in the writing process. Help them to focus on their development and view themselves and their progress in learning positively.



*based on ideas by Carol Dweck (2014) **A Study on Praise and Mindsets** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NW1VdDeoRY> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NW1VdDeoRY>

You can help your child greatly with this by:

- Focusing on their effort in relation to the end product
- Encouraging them to commit sufficient time and effort to their learning
- Talking about learning something yourself, and how this took time and experience
- Helping them to see any challenges as opportunities for learning
- Helping them to see that mistakes are OK, as long as we learn something from them
- Helping them to understand that their brain can learn new things through more experience

Writing Resources

Some recommendations for free online resources to inspire and support writing.

More appropriate for younger or less experienced writers

<https://www.funenglishgames.com/writinggames.html>

<https://www.dkfindout.com/uk/>

<https://www.pobble365.com/>

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/newsround>

<https://www.literacywagoll.com/>

<https://www.storyjumper.com/#>

<https://www.scribblitt.com/tellinstories/>

<https://storybird.com/>

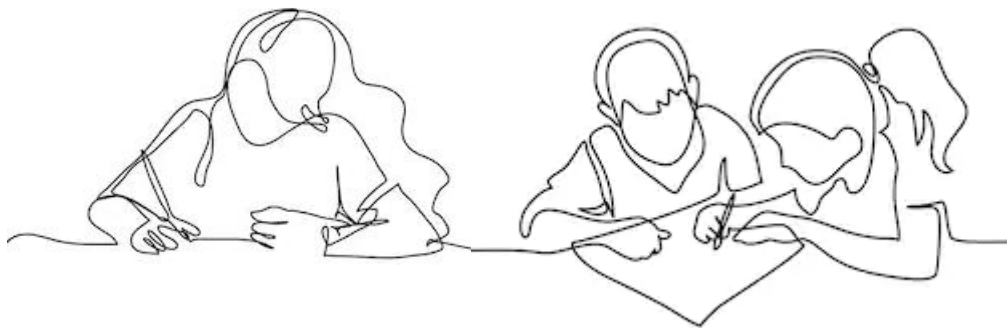
More appropriate for more experienced writers

<https://www.storyboardthat.com/storyboard-creator>

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/topics/zr77hyc>

<https://www.getunderlined.com/create/>

<https://storiumedu.com/help>



**“Words are our most inexhaustible
source of magic.”**

- JK Rowling