

# Learning to Read and Write

Children learn a great deal from other people. As parents and carers you are your child's first teachers. You have a powerful influence on your child's early learning.

From a very early age your child will need to experience a wide range of activities and experiences with you, for example, singing and saying rhymes, making and listening to music, listening to them and joining in conversations, painting and pretend play, to develop their early reading and writing skills. These activities will help your child take the first important steps towards reading and writing.

If you can be involved in helping your child we know it can make a big difference to your child's learning.

## Skills for reading and writing

- Speaking and listening are the foundations for reading and writing.
- Children need lots of opportunities to talk with others as they develop and practise their speaking and listening skills. This helps to build their confidence and improves their ability to communicate with other people. This is a really important aspect of learning to socialise and will help your child feel confident when the time comes to make friends.
- In order to make a good start in reading and writing, children need an adult to talk to and listen to them.
- Even everyday activities such as preparing meals, tidying up, putting shopping away and getting ready to go out offer you the chance to talk to your child, explaining what you are doing. Through these activities, children hear the way language is put together into sentences for a purpose.
- Books are a rich source of new words for your child; words you would not use in everyday conversations appear in books. Children need to have a wide vocabulary to understand the meaning of books, so read aloud and share books as often as you can. They will enjoy it and it will be useful to them when they come across these words in their own reading later on.



## Ways you can support your children at home: talking and listening

- **Make time to listen to your child talking** – as you meet them from school, as you walk, or travel home by car, in the supermarket as you shop, at meal times, bath times, and bedtimes – any time!
- **Switch off the TV, radio and mobile phones** – and really listen!
- **Show that you are interested in what they are talking about** – look at your child, smile, nod your head, ask a question or make a response to show that you really have been listening.
- **Make a collection of different toy creatures** – for example, a duck, a snake, an alien, say the sound it might make as you play together, for example, ‘quack-quack’, ‘sssssss’, ‘yuk-yuk’, and encourage your child to copy you.
- **Listen at home** – switch off the TV and listen to the sounds, both inside and outside the home. Can your child tell you what sounds they heard, in the order in which they heard them?
- **Play-a-tune** – and follow me! Make or buy some simple shakers, drums and beaters, then play a simple tune and ask your child to copy. Have fun!
- **Use puppets** and toys to make up stories or retell known ones. Record your child telling the story and play it back to them.

### The importance of speech sounds

As children grow older they begin to understand more about the sounds of our language and they are able to join in with rhymes, songs and stories by clapping, stamping and skipping. This is an important stage as the children’s ears are learning to tune into all the different sounds around them. Playing with sounds and tuning your child’s ears into sounds will develop phonological awareness, that is the ability to discriminate different sounds. Over time, this will help your child develop an understanding that words are made up of different sounds (*phonemes*) and they will be able to hear the different sounds in a word. Gradually they will learn to match sounds to letters (*graphemes*). This is phonic knowledge. They use this knowledge when they are reading and writing.

As we begin to teach the children the skills that they will need in order to be successful readers and writers, we focus on speaking and listening activities.

### Letters and Sounds – Phase 1 (Nursery and Reception)

In this ongoing phase, your child will be learning to:

Adapted from *The National Strategies/Early Years CLLD Helping your child with speaking, listening, reading and writing*

- have fun with sounds
- listen carefully
- develop their vocabulary
- speak confidently to you, other adults and other children
- tune into sounds
- listen and remember sounds
- talk about sounds
- understand that spoken words are made up of different sounds.

Phase 1 consists of seven interlinking parts:

- environmental sounds
- instrumental sounds
- body percussion
- rhythm and rhyme
- alliteration (words that begin with the same sound)
- voice sounds
- oral blending and segmenting (ongoing from the summer term in nursery).

You can help your child develop in each of these by trying some of the ideas below. Remember that all these activities should be fun and interactive. Give your child lots of encouragement and cuddles as you play together. Smiles and praise will help develop a sense of achievement and build confidence.

**This is all oral (*spoken*). Your child will not yet be expected to match the letter to the sound. The emphasis is on developing the ability to distinguish sounds and create sounds.**

Oral blending and segmenting is a later skill that will be important when the time comes for your child to read and write. Being able to hear the separate sounds within a word and then blend them together to understand that word is really important.

**Blending is a vital skill for reading.** The separate sounds (*phonemes*) of the word are spoken aloud, in order, all through the word, and are then merged together into the whole word. This merging together is called *blending*. For example, the adult would say **c-a-t = cat**.

**Segmenting is a vital skill for spelling.** The whole word is spoken aloud, then broken up into its separate sounds (*phonemes*) in order, all through the word. For example, the adult would say **cat = c-a-t**.

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### **Ways you can support your children at home: environmental sounds**

- Go on a listening walk – when walking down the road, make a point of listening to different sounds: cars revving, people talking, birds singing, dogs barking. When you get home, try to remember all the sounds you heard. You could try taping the sounds, to listen to them again, or try reproducing them yourselves, using your voices or instruments.
- Make sounds, using a range of props, such as running a stick along a fence or tapping on the bin lid.
- Invent a secret family ‘knock’ for entering rooms.
- Play ‘Sound lotto’. A commercial version of this can be purchased from many children’s toy stores but making your own, from your sound walk, would be far more rewarding.



### **Ways you can support your children at home: instrumental sounds**

- Make your own musical instruments, using cardboard rolls, tins, dried peas, beans, stones. Shake these loudly, softly, as you are marching, skipping or stomping. Play ‘Guess what’s inside the instrument’.
- Sing known songs loudly and then softly, stretch words in known songs and add new words or sounds.
- Listen to a range of music with your child, from rap to classical. Encourage your child to move in response to the variety of musical styles and moods.



### **Ways you can support your children at home: body percussion**

- Learn some action rhymes, such as ‘Wind the bobbin up’.
- Play some commercially produced tapes and CD-ROMs. Clap along with familiar rhymes and learn new ones.
- Listen to the sounds your feet make when walking, running or skipping: slowly, softly, fast, stomping

hard, in flipflops, boots, high heels.

- Try different types of clapping: clap your hands softly, fast and make a pattern for your child to follow. Do the same, clapping your thighs or stamping your feet. Tap your fingers. Click your tongue.
- Invent a special family clap routine for when someone does something really well.



### **Ways you can support your children at home: rhythm and rhyme**

- Get into the rhythm of language: bounce your child on your knee to the rhythm of a song or nursery rhyme, march or clap to a chant or poem.
- Help your child move to the rhythm of a song or rhyme.
- Read or say poems, songs, nursery songs and rhyming stories as often as you can, try to use gestures, tap regular beats and pause to emphasise the rhythm of the piece.
- Add percussion to mark the beats, using your hands, feet or instruments.
- Try out some rhythmic chanting such as ‘two, four, six, eight, hurry up or we’ll be late’ or ‘bip bop boo, who are you?’



### **Ways you can support your children at home: alliteration (words that begin with the same sound)**

- Alliteration is a lot of fun to play around with. Your child’s name can be a good place to start, for example, say: ‘Gurpreet gets the giggles’, ‘Milo makes music’, ‘Naheema’s nose’, ‘Carl caught a cat’, ‘Jolly Jessie jumped’, ‘Tina is talking’. Encourage other family members to have a go, for example: ‘Mummy munches muffins’, ‘Daddy is doing the dishes’.
- Emphasise alliteration in songs and stories, for example: ‘Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled

peppers’.

- Play around with familiar songs, such as ‘Old MacDonald had some sheep, shoes, shorts, with a sh sh here and a sh sh there’, to emphasise alliteration.
- Identify the odd one out, for example, *cat*, *cup*, *boy*, *car*.
- Make up little nonsense stories together, using lots of alliteration.
- Collect items that start with the same sound from the park, the garden and around the house.
- When shopping, think about items you are buying and say: ‘a tall tin of tomatoes’, ‘a lovely little lemon’. Encourage your child to do the same.



### **Ways you can support your children at home: voice sounds**

- Repeat your child’s vocalisations.
- Make fun noises or nonsense words.
- Say words in different ways (fast, slowly, high, low, using a funny voice).
- ‘Sing’ known songs using only sounds, for example, ‘la, la, la’, and ask your child to guess the song.
- Vary your tempo and pitch when reading stories.
- Make different voices for characters when reading stories.
- Read or tell sound stories. Your local library or bookshop will be able to point out some very good books that encourage sound-making as you read the story. This is huge fun and can involve all the family.



### **Ways you can support your children at home: oral blending and segmenting**

#### **Sound-talking or Robot-talking**

Find real objects around your home that have three phonemes (*sounds*) and practise ‘sound talk’. First, just let them listen, then see if they will join in, for example, saying:

‘I spy a p-e-g – peg.’

‘I spy a c-u-p – cup.’

‘Where’s your other s-o-ck – sock?’

'Simon says – put your hands on your h-ea-d.'

'Simon says – touch your ch-i-n.'

This is a very supportive activity to play with your child.

Try breaking down simple words when you are giving instructions or asking questions, such as 'Can you find your h-a-t hat?' 'Where is the c-a-t cat?' 'Sit on the s-ea-t seat' 'Eat your f-oo-d food'. It is really important to say the sounds (*phonemes*) aloud, in order, all through the word.

Prior to this, your child should have experienced lots of the environmental, instrumental and body percussion, rhythm and rhyming, alliteration, and sounds activities to tune in their ears.

## Phase 2 - We teach the children the smallest unit of sound – called a 'phoneme' (from Reception)

This is the order in which the 'phonemes' are taught and practised. Correct pronunciation is vital!  
c not cuh or cee    b not buh or bee    a not ay

Set 1 letters = s, a, t, p

Set 2 letters = i, n, m, d

Set 3 letters = g, o, c, k

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Set 4 letters = ck, e, u, r

Set 5 letters = h, b, f,ff, l,ll, ss

Set 6 letters = j, v, w, x

Set 7 letters = y, z,zz, qu

A phoneme can be represented by more than one letter. E.g. ll as in bell ss as in hiss  
ck as in sock.



## **Ways you can support your children at home**

### **Magnetic letters**

Buy magnetic letters for your fridge, or for use with a tin tray.

### **Making little words together**

Make little words together, for example, *it, up, am, and, top, dig, run, met, pick*. As you select the letters, say them aloud: 'a-m – am', 'm-e-t – met'.

### **Breaking words up**

Now do it the other way around: read the word, break the word up and move the letters away, saying: 'met – m-e-t'.



**Both these activities help children to see that reading and spelling are reversible processes.**

**Don't forget the writing box!**

Spelling is harder than reading words – praise, don't criticise. Little whiteboards and pens, and magic boards, are a good way for children to try out spellings and practise their handwriting.

Your child might be trying to use letters from their name to write; this shows that they know that writing needs real alphabet letters.

Make or buy an alphabet poster.

### Getting ready for writing

We will model how to form letters (*graphemes*) correctly, so that children can eventually acquire a fluent and legible handwriting style. These skills develop over a long period of time. A child's ability to form a letter correctly is a separate skill from phonics. Holding a pen or pencil needs considerable co-ordination and practice in making small movements with hands and fingers.

In the early stages of phonics children can use letter cards or magnetic letters to demonstrate their knowledge of phonics.

### Writing in lower-case letters

We shall be teaching lower-case letters, as well as capital letters. As most writing will be in lower-case letters it is useful if you can use these at home. A good start is for your child to write their name correctly, starting with a capital letter followed by lower-case letters.

We use the fully cursive handwriting script – attached is an example.



### Ways you can support your children at home

#### **Using their whole body**

For handwriting children need to be well co-ordinated through their whole body, not just their hands and fingers. Games that help co-ordination include throwing balls at a target, under-arm and over-arm, and bouncing balls – also skipping on the spot, throwing a Frisbee, picking up pebbles from the beach and throwing them into the sea. Have fun!

#### **Hand and finger play**

Action rhymes such as *'Incy wincy spider'*, *'One potato, two potato'* and *'Tommy Thumb'* are great fun and get their hands and fingers moving. Playing with salt dough or clay really helps strengthen little fingers, as does cookery and using simple toolkits.

#### **Hand-eye co-ordination**

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Pouring water into jugs and cups of different sizes, sweeping up with a dustpan and brush, cutting, sticking, tracing, threading beads, completing puzzles, peeling off stickers and sticking them in the right place – these all help hand–eye co-ordination.

### **Pencil hold**

The ‘pincer’ movement needs to be practised. This is important as it enables children to hold a pencil properly as they write. Provide them with kitchen tongs and see if they can pick up small objects. Move on to challenging them to pick up smaller things, for example, little cubes, sugar lumps, dried peas, lentils, first with chopsticks, then with tweezers.

Ask children to peg objects to a washing line.

Provide plenty of different types of pen and pencil; hold their hand to practise the correct grip.

As the children progress they will be introduced to other phonemes (Phases 3 -5)

They will also be taught the ‘tricky’ words – those that cannot be read or spelt using the sounds of the letters. E.g. to, no, the, go. This will be achieved through the use of flash cards and games.



### **Ways you can support your child at home**

- Set a timer. Call out one word at a time and get your child to spell it on a magic board or a small whiteboard, against the timer – remember, they can use magnetic letters.
- Play a game – hunt the word - hide words in sand or flour, set a timer, hold up the word that you want them to hunt for, and ‘go’! Repeat the word and encourage them to say –‘I am looking for the word ‘the’.
- Play ‘**Pairs**’, turning over two words at a time trying to find a matching pair. This is especially helpful with the tricky words: **the the, to to, no no, go go, I I**
- Don’t worry if they get some wrong! These are hard to remember – they need plenty of practice.

As the children make even more progress, they will be introduced to the remaining phonemes, and given time to practise and consolidate their new learning.

Obviously, the more children are exposed to activities involving letters and sounds, the quicker they will consolidate their newly acquired skills.

Your involvement in this new learning is vital, and we ask that whenever possible you take time to encourage them to use their new knowledge through the activities outlined above.



### **Ways you can support your children at home: other things to do at home**

- Turn off the TV so you can listen to and talk to your child.
- Read every day to your child.
- Set up a place where your child can experiment with mark-making, both outside and inside, using gloop, paint, pens, stamps and stencils onto a variety of surfaces such as paper, cardboard and material.
- Collect a variety of pencils and pens, and keep them handy for your child.
- Create a special writing bag to keep little writing tools in, for travelling in the car or visiting the doctor's. Change the contents regularly.



### **Ways you can support your children at home: what to do if your child is reluctant to read or write at home**

Relax! It is important not to worry if your child shows no inclination to write at home; the important thing is to keep on sharing books and talking together. There is no need to insist that your child does some writing – more often than not they will choose to do so when they have a real reason to.

#### **Reading**

- Make sure your child sees you reading.
- Read **to** your child. Show you like the book. Bring stories to life by using loud, soft, scary voices – let yourself go!

- Leave books around your house for your child to dip into.
- Let your child choose what **they** would like to read – books, comics, catalogues.
- Read favourite books over and over again. Enjoy!

### **Writing**

- Make sure your child sees you writing.
- Compose an email together inviting a friend over to tea.
- Make words together using magnetic letters.
- Make up a story together about one of their toys. You write for them, repeating the sentences as you write. When it is complete, they can draw pictures to go with it.
- Buy stickers of a favourite film or TV programme and make a book about it.

Thank you for showing your interest and if anything that has been discussed needs more clarification, then please do not hesitate to speak to your child's teacher.

## **Useful websites and leaflets for more information**

[www.parentscentre.gov.uk/foragegroup/3to5years/readandwritetogether](http://www.parentscentre.gov.uk/foragegroup/3to5years/readandwritetogether)

This link to the Parents Centre website gives some really good ideas about how you can enjoy sharing books with your child and tells you a bit more about phonics.

[www.parentscentre.gov.uk/foragegroup/5to7years/alittlereadinggoesalongway](http://www.parentscentre.gov.uk/foragegroup/5to7years/alittlereadinggoesalongway)

This link gives ideas about how to help your child as they are learning to read.

[www.read-count.org/index.asp](http://www.read-count.org/index.asp)

This is a website for you and your child to explore together. It will give you some ideas about reading with your child and has online games for young children to play, both with you and on their own. It also has ideas for games to play away from the computer.

[www.basic-skills.co.uk](http://www.basic-skills.co.uk)

The Basic Skills website will keep you updated on a range of literacy developments.

[www.bookstart.co.uk](http://www.bookstart.co.uk)

This website provides information about the national Bookstart scheme and the Bookstart packs that your child will receive as a baby, a toddler and at age three to four. It also gives information about sharing books with your child. You can find out about Bookstart events in your area, which you can attend with your child.

You can get 'Learning Together' leaflets – 'The road to reading' and 'Making their mark – children's early writing' (and other leaflets covering a range of topics) from Early Education, 136 Cavell Street, London, E1 2JA. Telephone 020 7539 5400. You can also download them from the website [www.early-education.org.uk](http://www.early-education.org.uk).

[www.talktoyourbaby.org.uk](http://www.talktoyourbaby.org.uk)

This website provides lots of information for parents and carers of babies and young children, and suggestions for activities, features, DVD-ROMs, books and events that are both useful and fun. You can have their free newsletter emailed to you directly.

[www.ican.org.uk](http://www.ican.org.uk)

This website provides lots of information for parents and teachers on the importance of speaking and listening skills for young children's development. Although it is aimed at early communication development, there is a lot of very useful information and material, such as *Chatter Matters*, that can be downloaded from the website; some free materials can be ordered.

[www.nationalliteracytrust.org.uk/familyreading/parents](http://www.nationalliteracytrust.org.uk/familyreading/parents)

This website offers a wealth of information about how to make reading and writing fun for you and all your family. It promotes their campaign to make 'every home a reading home'. It also offers many links to further websites.

[www.sparklebox.co.uk](http://www.sparklebox.co.uk)

Lots of free downloadable resources to support your child.

For help with pronunciation of sounds, type 'articulation of phonemes' into Google. The first link should be for the National Strategies website. Follow this link and a video demonstrating how to pronounce the sounds will be displayed.

Adapted from *The National Strategies/Early Years CLLD Helping your child with speaking, listening, reading and writing*

## Phase 2 – Letter Progression

Set 1:	s	as in <u>s</u> nake
	a	as in <u>a</u> nt
	t	as in <u>t</u> ennis
	p	as in <u>p</u> uff
Set 2:	i	as in <u>i</u> nk
	n	as in <u>n</u> oise
	m	as in <u>m</u> eal
	d	as in <u>d</u> rum
Set 3:	g	as in <u>g</u> urgle
	o	as in <u>o</u> n
	c	as in <u>c</u> astanets
	k	as in <u>k</u> ite
Set 4:	ck	as in qu <u>ack</u>
	e	as in <u>e</u> gg
	u	as in <u>u</u> p
	r	as in <u>r</u> ag
Set 5:	h	as in <u>h</u> op
	b	as in <u>b</u> at
	f, ff	as in <u>f</u> ish, <u>pu</u> ff
	l, ll	as in <u>l</u> ollipop, <u>hi</u> ll
	ss	as in <u>hi</u> ss

### Phase 3 – Letter Progression

Set 6:	j	as in <u>j</u> am
	v	as in <u>v</u> an
	w	as in <u>w</u> ind
	x	as in <u>x</u> -ray
Set 7:	y	as in <u>y</u> oghurt
	z, zz	as in bu <u>zz</u>
	qu	as in <u>qu</u> ack

### Phase 3 - Graphemes

ch	as in <u>ch</u> oo
sh	as in hu <u>sh</u>
th	as in <u>th</u> is
ng	as in stro <u>ng</u>

ai	as in <u>ai</u> n
ee	as in <u>ee</u> ore
igh	as in <u>igh</u> t
oa	as in <u>oa</u> t
oo	as in <u>oo</u> k, <u>oo</u> n

ar	as in <u>ar</u> t
or	as in <u>or</u> e
ur	as in <u>ur</u> t
ow	as in <u>ow</u>
oi	as in <u>oi</u>
ear	as in <u>ear</u>
air	as in <u>air</u>
ure	as in <u>ure</u>
er	as in <u>er</u>

## Jolly Phonics - The Actions

- s** Weave hand in an s shape, like a snake, and say ssssss.
- a** Wiggle fingers above elbow as if ants crawling on you and say *a, a, a*.
- t** Turn head from side to side as if watching tennis and say *t, t, t*.
- p** Pretend to puff out candles and say *p, p, p*.
- i** Pretend to be a mouse by wriggling fingers at end of nose and squeak *i, i, i*.
- n** Make a noise, as if you are a plane – hold arms out and say *nnnnnn*.
- m** Rub tummy as if seeing tasty food and say *mmmmmm*.
- d** Beat hands up and down as if playing a drum and say *d, d, d*.
- g** Spiral hand down, as if water going down the drain, and say *g, g, g*.
- o** Pretend to turn light switch on and off and say *o, o; o, o*.
- ck** Raise hands and snap fingers as if playing castanets and say *ck, ck, ck*.
- e** Pretend to tap an egg on the side of a pan and crack it into the pan, saying *eh, eh, eh*.
- u** Pretend to be putting up an umbrella and say *u, u, u*.
- r** Pretend to be a puppy holding a piece of rag, shaking head from side to side, and say *rrrrrr*.
- h** Hold hand in front of mouth panting as if you are out of breath and say *h, h, h*.
- b** Pretend to hit a ball with a bat and say *b, b, b*.
- f** Let hands gently come together as if toy fish deflating, and say *fffff*.
- l** Pretend to lick a lollipop and say *lllll*
- j** Pretend to wobble on a plate and say *j, j, j*.
- v** Pretend to be holding the steering wheel of a van and say *vvvvv*.
- W** Blow on to open hand, as if you are the wind, and say *wh, wh, wh*.



- x** Pretend to take an x-ray of someone with a camera and say *ks, ks, ks*.
- y** Pretend to be eating a yoghurt and say *y, y, y*.
- z** Put arms out at sides and pretend to be a bee, saying *zzzzzz*.
- qu** Make a duck's beak with your hands and say *qu, qu, qu*.
- ch** Move arms at sides as if you are a train and say *ch, ch, ch*.
- sh** Place index finger over lips and say *shshsh*.
- th** Pretend to be naughty clowns and stick out tongue a little for the th, and further for the th sound (this and thumb).
- ng** Imagine you are a weightlifter, and pretend to lift a heavy weight above your head, saying *ng...*
- ai** Cup hand over ear and say *ai, ai, ai*.
- ee, or** Put hands on head as if ears on a donkey and say *eeyore, eeyore*.
- igh** Stand to attention and salute, saying *igh igh*.
- oa** Bring hand over mouth as if you have done something wrong and say *oh!*
- oo** Move head back and forth as if it is the cuckoo in a cuckoo clock, saying *u, oo; u, oo* (little and long oo).
- ar** Open mouth wide and say *ah*. (British English). Flap hands as if a seal and say *ar, ar, ar*. (Nth Am English)
- oi** Cup hands around mouth and shout to another boat saying *oi! ship ahoy!*
- ow** Pretend your finger is a needle and prick thumb saying *ow, ow, ow*.
- er** Roll hands over each other like a mixer and say *ererer*.

## 100 HIGH-FREQUENCY WORD LIST

### PHASE 2

#### Decodable words

a	an	as	at	if	in	is	it
of	off	on	can	dad	had	back	and
get	big	him	his	not	got	up	mum
but	put						

#### Tricky words

the	to	I	no	go	into		
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### PHASE 3

#### Decodable words

will	that	this	then	them	with	see	for
now	down	look	too				

#### Tricky words

he	she	we	me	be	was	you	they
all	are	my	her				

### PHASE 4

#### Decodable words

went	its	from	children	just	help		
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#### Tricky words

said	have	like	so	do	some	come	were
there	little	one	when	out	what		

### PHASE 5

#### Decodable words

don't	old	I'm	by	time	house	about	your
day	made	came	here	saw	very		

#### Tricky words

oh	their	people	Mr	Mrs	looked	called	asked
could							

