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Ideas to use at home

Helping your child with literacy



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**national literacy
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Helping your child with reading



Be confident that your child will learn to read. Show that you enjoy reading by having lots of different reading material at home and by giving books as special presents.

Children value reading through watching members of their family read and write every day. Encourage your child to read anytime, anywhere.

Children often enjoy reading more if it is shared. Make time away from television and interruptions to read aloud with your child.

Read in your home language if your first language is not English.

Encourage your child to read by sharing such activities as:

- reading signs and posters
- following a street directory
- checking the television guide
- choosing a video
- using a recipe
- reading game rules
- reading the newspaper aloud together
- playing word games including crossword puzzles
- reading instructions
- looking at letterbox leaflets
- finding brands at the shops
- reading magazines, comics, poems and rhymes.

Listen to your child read every day. Here are some ideas to use now and then, but remember some reading should just be for pleasure:

- look at the cover, title, pictures and talk about what the book might be about
- talk about the story so far and what might happen next
- after reading, talk about the story and ask questions
- talk about the pictures and how they add meaning to the text
- take turns when reading a harder book.

Remember the three Ps for new words: pause, prompt, praise.

That is, allow your child time to work out the word (pause), use clues taken from the context (prompt) and praise your child for trying.

If necessary, however, simply tell your child the word.

Talk to your child's classroom teacher or the principal for further help and advice.

Helping your child with writing

Helping your child with spelling

Read your child's writing or have him or her read the writing to you and comment on the positive aspects. For example, "I really like the way you've described this."

- Praise your child for having a go at writing words that are new and explain how to spell words which are causing difficulty.
- Talk to your child about the choices an author or film maker might make to create a book, play or film in a particular way. Talk about language choices and why characters look or behave in certain ways.
- Read and talk about the writing that your child brings home from school.
- Praise your child for using neat and legible handwriting.
- To help develop spelling and vocabulary, play word games such as *I Spy*, *Scrabble*, *Boggle*, *Scattergories* and crosswords.
- Have your child label things that he or she designs or makes.
- Make a photo album or scrapbook with your child and have him or her write captions for the photos and pictures, or encourage your child to keep a diary of a special event, e.g. a holiday diary.
- Make the writing of notes, letters and stories a normal part of family life.
- Involve your child in helping to complete forms.



Many writing activities are related to spelling. Help your child with those areas of spelling with which you feel confident. Remember that not all English words can be spelt correctly by "sounding out", e.g. the words "you" and "said".

- Talk about how you spell and what you do when you don't know how to spell a word.
- Have your child write at home, e.g. writing shopping and birthday lists, filling in forms, writing notes to family members, writing phone messages and reminder notes, replying to letters or sending cards.
- Provide a dictionary and use it together. Remember that dictionaries are more useful if your child has a knowledge of the alphabet and how a dictionary works. Talk about how you need to use the dictionary sometimes.
- Encourage your child to practise new words, say them, write them from memory, then check them.
- If your child can't find a strategy to help spell the word; simply tell them how it's spelt.
- Encourage your child to try to spell new words, then praise the parts that are correct, and suggest what else is needed. For example, if your child has written "litle" for "little" you might say, "You have five of the six letters right. One of the letters should be doubled. Can you tell which one it should be?"
- Teach your child that spell checkers can be useful but are not always effective, e.g. when the child types a word that sounds the same such as "sure" for "shore" or when the computer uses American spelling.

Helping your child with talking and listening

If you are used to speaking a language other than English at home, it is important that you continue to support your child in maintaining the home language(s). This will also help your child with English.

The following suggestions apply to all languages, including English.

- Ask your child to talk to you about a wide variety of topics. Tell your child if you are unfamiliar with aspects of the topic and ask for more information.
- Talk with your child about the ideas and events in stories as you read books together.
- Listen to your child as he or she tells you about events that did not involve you. This helps children clarify their ideas and prepares them for writing.
- Sometimes ask your child questions that can have more than one answer, rather than questions that have a very limited response like "yes" or "no".
- Talk about different ways to solve problems.
- Ask your child to give reasons for his or her choices when making a decision. Listen and respond in ways that encourage further thinking aloud, rather than ending the conversation with your opinion.
- Talking with other children is valuable for developing your child's talking skills. Provide opportunities for children to talk, e.g. planning something together.



- Provide opportunities for your child to listen to and share ideas with a range of people from various backgrounds and age groups.
- Show by your behaviour that you are listening, not just hearing. Build on your child's responses. Interact with them. Ask questions, add information and make links between ideas.
- Talk at a normal pace and volume and use adult words.
- Talk about ways of talking and listening effectively, e.g. not walking away from the person you are talking to or listening carefully on the phone to remember messages.