



**Hampton Hill
Junior School**

HELPING YOUR CHILD AT HOME



READING, SPELLING AND WRITING

Helping Your Child at Home: Reading, Spelling and Writing

Introduction

For a child to communicate and express themselves as they get older, their language ability is absolutely key. The following sections have been divided up according to the key skills, but they are all closely linked, and none of the skills should be tackled in isolation.

Everything you do to help your child should be fun and meaningful, and help them to understand that language has a real purpose and can give them ways to really enjoy what our modern world has to offer, both on paper and on screen. A rich vocabulary and repertoire of language structures will help them to recognise more efficiently exactly what is being communicated to them, and also help them to communicate more efficiently and fluently in return.



Reading, writing, speaking and listening are a key part of children's learning in their first years at school. Your child's teacher will build on the experiences they bring with them to school. The learning they do at home with you and with their teachers at school helps children to:

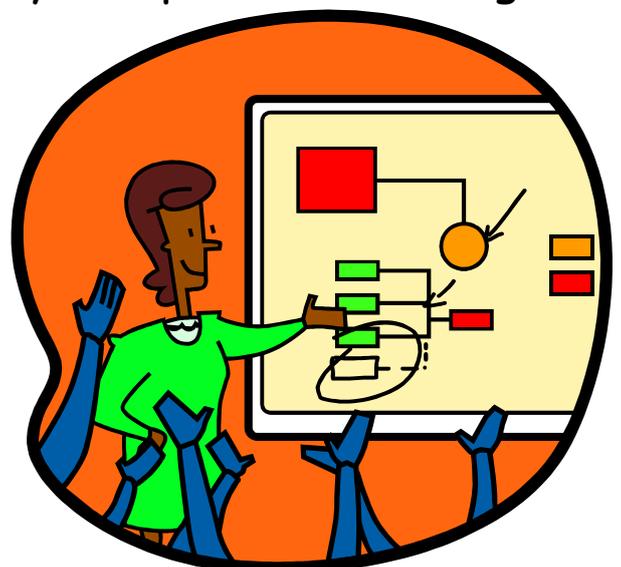
- Want to read
- Learn new words
- Spell words correctly and write clearly
- Find things out by reading - from stories, information books, the internet, magazines and newspapers
- Communicate in writing
- Understand that people write in different ways for different reasons
- Use language with confidence



In our experience any help given at home is beneficial. This booklet outlines a few of our methods and approaches, and answers some of the most common questions parents have about helping with reading, spelling and writing.

What can I do if I have any questions?

We hold curriculum evenings yearly and parents' evenings each term, details of which are given in our weekly newsletter. Topic areas to be covered are outlined through the curriculum overview issued at the beginning of each term. You can also arrange meetings or ask questions via your child's home school diary.



READING

How can I help my child with reading?

Reading at home is a key aspect of homework and it is important that your children's interest in books is maintained throughout their school life. It would be highly beneficial if you could read with them for a short time almost every day. Children regard reading as a special kind of sharing because they have your personal attention. Let your child decide they have had enough each time you read together. Try and make reading fun for you and your child, not a chore.



Encourage them to look at print in the environment e.g. street signs, shop names, food packages, menus, the internet and maps. Help children use the newspaper or TV guides (both on paper and on screen) to select their viewing. Look at websites together, and read aloud from them. Discuss

books together. Keep the meaning of the story going by gently prompting. Be positive about errors e.g. 'You had a good try with that word, let's have a look at the picture/first letter to help us.'

Choosing books for and with children should be a huge pleasure. You may find it useful to use your local library and help your child choose some books. The librarians will be able to give helpful advice. Also, keep your eyes open for book and storytelling events at the library and local bookshops.



Other parents may have books that have been popular, and many children will tell their friends about their favourite books. Some books will be easy for your child and they will want to read to you. Other books will have difficult parts and you will need to help. Some interesting books may be too hard for your child to read on their own, so you will need to help them in experiencing this new, more sophisticated level of language.

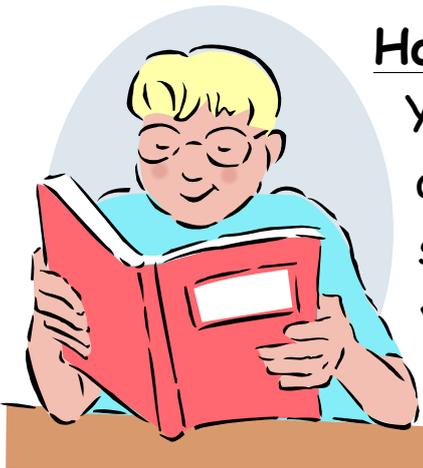


Children learn to read best when they have many ways of working out the meaning. These are like searchlights. The more lights that are turned on, the easier it is for them to read. The 'lights' include:

- the sounds of letters
- the shapes of letters and words (that they recognise by sight)
- the meaning (that will come next)

The more opportunities children have, at school and at home, to enjoy reading, the sooner they begin to be confident about it.

The colour coding scheme of graded reading books used in school gives you a general guide to their difficulty. However, within each band some books will be slightly more difficult than others. If your child appears to be struggling to read a book, take it in turns to read a page each. If the book seems to be too easy to you, try to remember that children should be 90-95% successful in their reading with only a few challenging words at any one time.



How do young children learn to read?

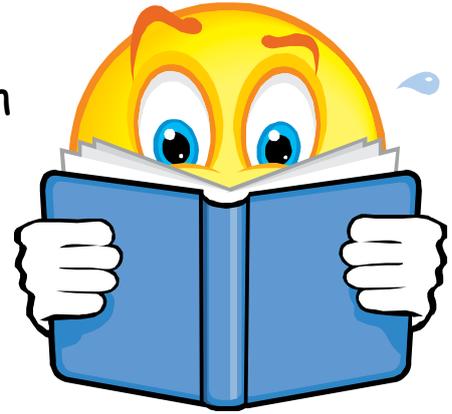
Young children learn a great deal from you about reading and writing before they start school. They learn to talk and listen to what you say. They learn about looking at books, asking questions about the story and starting to write. When they go to school, the help you give them is just as important. Little and often works well.

How can I help a young child with reading?

- Read stories together
- Let them see you reading and writing
- Visit the public library
- Listen to tapes of books and songs
- Talk about the story together
- Make shopping lists together
- Browse appropriate websites or CD-Roms with them
- Share songs and rhymes
- Talk about TV programmes
- Read signs and labels together when you are out and about

What should I do if my child is stuck?

- Let them read on, then they may be able to work out the word
- Point at the pictures to help with meaning
- Give them the first or last sound and see if they can do the rest themselves



You could also read along with them. Importantly, first **PAUSE**, then **PROMPT**, then **PRAISE**.

What about older children and reading?

- read with them and talk about the ideas in what they have read
- encourage them to read 'everyday' print - DIY manuals, instructions, TV guides, recipes, websites, road signs etc
- give them plenty of opportunities to write as well, in notebooks, diaries, scrapbooks or on a computer
- help them to notice the spellings of common words (because, many) and encourage them to look, check and remember words they use often



The most important thing is that children learn better when they are enjoying themselves. By enjoying books together and sharing a love of stories from the earliest age, you are helping your child to develop - and learning

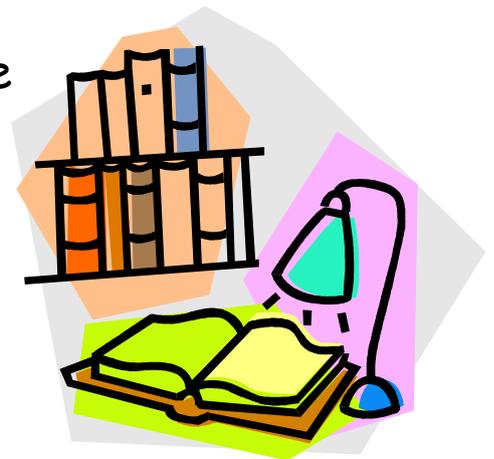
to read is fun! Boys in particular need to know that reading is important and can be done in many different ways, so

brothers, fathers, uncles and grandfathers sharing the reading experience with them is important.

What can I do when older children get stuck?

The most important thing you can do in this case is to encourage children to use all the available strategies and information to make an educated guess. More specifically, you can:

- ask them about the books they are bringing home. Read parts of them yourself so that you are better able to discuss them.
- Ask questions about what they have read to check they have really understood. Are they able to retell in their own words?
- Re-reading familiar and favourite stories will enable the children to spot patterns and structures beyond the story itself.
- Buy books as presents.
- Set up a special place for books, either those from the library or their own.



Part of learning to be a better reader is being able to guess what new words mean and how they sound. The following will help:

- Break the word down so the children can see that they already know the main part (e.g. break-ing, eat-en).
- Read books on a topic they already know a lot about, they may have heard the more difficult words before.

- Read together, then read again, missing out words. Get your child to fill in the blanks. They could use a different word with a similar meaning. This shows your child is thinking about the impact of different language on meaning.
- Clap or count the parts of long words (e.g. happiness would be three claps).
- Let your child 'read on' to the end of the sentence. By this time they may realise their mistake and correct themselves.
- Be patient! It's important your child knows it is OK to make mistakes and that you can help them if needed. It's all part of the learning process.
- Use books with pictures that you can use to help with meaning, then progress to books without. Don't cover pictures up, they are all part of the 'decoding' of what's on the page.
- Stick labels on things at home (even better, let them do it!). This shows them how language works in the real world to describe things.

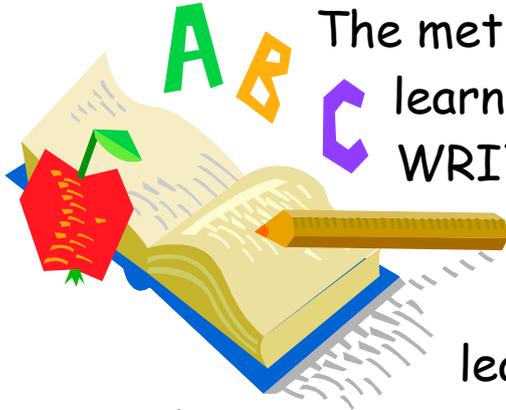
Remember - there is 'language' everywhere around us - it doesn't have to be in a book, or written on paper. Text messages (if spelled correctly), websites, signs etc., all offer a meaningful reading opportunity.



SPELLING

How can I help my child with spelling?

Learning spellings:



The method we encourage the children to use to learn spellings is LOOK, SAY, COVER, SAY, WRITE and CHECK. This is useful for regular words that follow a spelling pattern.

The children have a list of spellings to learn weekly in this way. If your child needs extra practice, use of plastic, wooden or sponge letters when your child says the word and the sounds may help.

A useful way of checking whether your child has retained the spelling is to ask them words away from the list, and in sentences that reinforce their meaning. Common irregular words (e.g. said, would) are often difficult to learn; tracing over the word, using a wipe-off board and pen to make the word you have written disappear are all good fun.



Challenge your child to see how many times they can write the word in a minute. A little practice done often will be the most effective, and try to make it as fun as possible. Traditional word games like Scrabble and I-Spy are excellent practice. Competent spellers can have fun looking for interesting words and spellings in a dictionary or thesaurus.

It is really important that the words in the weekly spelling lists are put into context by using them in sentences, and finding words that are similar in meaning for comparison. Learning words in isolation will not make children better spellers.

Everyday activities

- Spell out words with fridge magnets or letter tiles from word games. Take some letters out, move them around and ask your child to sort them out.
- Play games with lists of words. Can they sort them into alphabetical order, either by first or second letter.
- Use old newspapers and magazines for word finding games e.g. highlighting every word that ends with -ing, starts with 'ph'. You can make this more complicated as the spellings get harder.
- Use a mirror so your child can see how their mouth moves when saying different sounds and letters that are easily mixed up, like 'b' and 'd', 'm' and 'w'.
- Word ladders are an excellent way of seeing what happens when you add letters to a word e.g. tap - tape - taped.



WRITING

How can I help my child with writing?

Handwriting

In order to produce legible, fluent joined-up writing it is important that your child holds their pencil correctly, and ideally is sitting with both feet on the floor, at a table or a desk. They should grip the pencil between thumb and index finger, using the middle finger as a rest.



If your child is left-handed, they may find it more comfortable to keep the paper at an angle of 45° on the table. Children should enjoy writing and feel confident about making marks on the paper. Ultimately writing in a neat, individual way that is easily read should come naturally to them. Tracing and practice of letter shapes, then moving onto joining them, all takes practice. This all takes time, so anything you can do to supplement what is done in school will help your child.

You can help further by.....



- Modelling good writing as often as possible, by ensuring that what you write is neat, legible, and useful. Children need to understand that writing always has a purpose!

- When they are starting out, inevitably the writing will be untidy. Try not to put them off as they are learning - let them make the marks, confidence is essential.
- Write a story your child has told you. You can perfect it together and both be really proud of what you produce.
- Help them to make their own labels, notices, cards and books.
- Encourage them to write stories of their own. Discuss the characters, the plot, where it is happening to help them develop their ideas as they write.



- Talk about the difference in writing needed when talking about the past (I went to school yesterday), the present, (today I am here) and future (we are going swimming next week).
- Use lower case instead of capitals, and use capitals as correctly as possible, as children find lower case letters easier to write, and they will very quickly need to understand how capitals are used in writing.

Using the computer to write

This is an excellent resource for developing language skills in many different ways, and most children really enjoy seeing their words on screen. However, your child still needs to be able to write by hand, so any ICT work should supplement writing with a pen or pencil.



A final word.....

Everything you do with your child's language work should be enjoyable and meaningful for all involved. It should NEVER be a chore. If it looks like this is happening, then use different ways to engage your child.

Remember also that your child's teacher is an excellent source of advice and support and will be happy to share ideas that may help you and your child.

