

Helping your child at home

An activity guide to support Early Reading and Phonics

Sound-talking or Robot-talking

Find real objects around your home that have three phonemes (sounds) and practice 'sound talk'. First, just let your child 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.'

Magnetic letters

Buy magnetic letters for your fridge, or for use with a tin tray. Find out which letters have been taught – have fun finding these with your child and place them on the magnetic surface.

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.

Using their whole body

For handwriting, children need to be well coordinated 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

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 practice the correct grip.

Tricky words games

- 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**

Play Snap - Make a set of cards with words your child is learning on. Ensure that each word is written on two separate cards. Shuffle up the cards and share them out. Each player takes turns to turn over their card, put it down and read the word. If it matches the previous card played, the first person to notice shouts 'snap!' and wins the pile. This game is best used to practice words your child knows fairly well, rather than new ones, as it's quite fast-paced.