



How to help your child write at home

Encouraging writing at home – getting started

Sometimes the toughest part of writing is knowing where to start. Begin by discussing experiences that can spark children's imagination, encouraging them to make notes of the ideas that they like. Inspiration can come from anywhere – whether it's something that you saw on your daily walk, a show, photos from a special day or a story that you've read together.

Here are some ideas on getting started with writing...

Set SMART writing goals	Encouraging your child to set a SMART goal for their writing can help to motivate and inspire them to get started. Whether it's finishing a story with a clear plot by the end of the school year or writing for 10 minutes every day, make sure their goals are <u>S</u> pecific, <u>M</u> easurable, <u>A</u> chievable, <u>R</u> elevant and <u>T</u> ime-bound.
Make a schedule	Once you've set a goal together, you could plan out some time each day or week to dedicate to writing. Children often thrive on routine, so practising at a regular time can help them to keep up the habit. That's not to say that spontaneous writing is off the cards! All children learn differently, and if a flexible approach works best for your child, then go for it.
Create a writing corner	Environment can play a key part in encouraging your child to write more at home. Why not try creating a cosy writing corner for them to practice writing skills? Ideally, this writing space should be quiet, comfortable and well lit. Have writing supplies (including notepads, pens, pencils, post-it notes and crayons) to hand as well as creative prompts such as magazines, pictures or toys. A desk and chair that is the right size can also encourage better handwriting and good posture.



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List ideas	<p>Next, encourage your child to make a note of any ideas that come to mind. No idea is a bad idea at this stage! Some techniques to help idea inspiration include;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mind maps• Cut out pictures to make collages and storylines• Category lists• Note down interesting things they have seen or experienced that day
Plan and plot	<p>For story or report writing, it helps to have a plan in place. Try using post-it notes to help them plan out a storyline to create the most exciting sequence of events.</p>
Be prepared	<p>Writing can happen anywhere in the house (or even in the garden). Placing notepads and pens around your home can be handy for when inspiration strikes!</p>
<p><u>How to improve writing skills at home</u></p> <p>Explore some tips and ideas to improve their writing process from home...</p>	
Imitate	<p>This is the process that teacher Pie Corbett coined when supporting children to write. Notice that it starts with 'imitate' – this means that it's okay for children to stick closely to ideas that they've seen before or that you have discussed together when they are getting started with their writing.</p> <p>Remember – no great author ever wrote a book that was perfect the first time around! It's okay to give them help coming up with ideas, discuss the use of vocabulary, new grammar and story techniques. Talk about and make note of any words, techniques or</p>



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	<p>ideas they want to use; it's easier for children to reflect these ideas in their writing. By imitating first, they gain the confidence and competence to move on to more original writing.</p>
Innovate	<p>Innovate comes next. Try reading out what your child has written together, then decide on one thing you could improve to make their writing skills even better.</p> <p>If you're looking at descriptive writing, have you used all five senses to set the scene? If your child has just learnt about similes, have you tried introducing a metaphor too? Check the variation in their style of writing, could you amend the sentence structure? Make sure to give your child lots of encouragement for trying new things. By challenging them little by little, you will naturally encourage your child's sense of perseverance.</p>
Invent	<p>When their ideas are flowing and they are excited by their own imagination, let them invent! Remember that inventors are people who experiment, make a mess, and succeed by a trial and learn approach. Cressida Cowell, the author of 'How to Train Your Dragon', supports this sentiment saying, "children are the most creative people on earth because they don't know the rules yet!"</p> <p>It's important not to discourage a child from writing because they haven't got it all right – you improve through practice, not by doing things perfectly the first time. The more you can celebrate and encourage creativity, the more fearless your child will become in trying out different ideas.</p>
Reading and writing combined	<p>Reading plays a huge part in helping children to learn the structure of stories and magpie ideas. Visit your local library to borrow novels and short stories to help inspire your children. Lots of great stories have been inspired by other authors' books. Encourage your children to read lots and take ideas to mould into their own masterpieces.</p>



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Writing activities at home

Now we've talked about writing techniques, here are some practical and fun writing activities to put them into practice!

Write a book or film review	Why not try writing a review of a great book, film or TV programme you have read/watched together recently? Learning to write in lots of different formats and styles will put them in good stead for school.
Describe a picture in words	The wonderful thing about this activity is that there are so many resources you can use that are lying around the house! Whether it's a photo of family members, a picture in a magazine or a painting on the wall – ask your child to describe it in words. They could even write a story based on the image.
Describe everyday objects	Point to objects around the house and experiment by getting them to describe them as creatively as possible. This can be great practice for using alliteration, metaphors and similes.
Write a diary or journal	Writing a personal diary not only helps to get children into the habit of writing but is also a great way of letting out emotions and making sense of their world. The act of writing down their thoughts, feelings and observations each day could help them get more comfortable with writing and connect them with their own ideas.
Create an instruction manual	Maybe it's working the TV or giving instructions on how to bake a cake – mix up their writing practice with different formats.



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Pick a word of the week	As a family, choose a word to focus on each week. Then everyone can have a go with using it in their writing in increasingly creative ways. The more peculiar the word – the funnier this activity can be!
Write a poem, song or a play	For little creatives, or for children who view writing as 'boring', writing practice can be disguised in the form of creating a poem, song or play. The motivation can be performing their piece once it's finished!
Write letters	Letter writing is an important skill. If they are passionate about a social issue, you could encourage them to write a powerful letter to their MP. Or, you could try setting them up with a pen pal in another country for a culture exchange. If that's out of reach, writing letters to friends, family or even imaginary strangers works too.
Write together	Why not try writing a story together – one paragraph at a time. This can also be a fun game for them to play with friends, especially when the story escalates into a wild and wacky adventure! Think the consequences game but with writing instead of pictures.
Everyday writing	Task your child with being your 'writer' for the day. Be it shopping lists, reminders or emails – giving them a sense of responsibility can help to motivate them to write.

Ways to encourage writing at home

If your child struggles with motivation, here are some more [writing tips for young authors](#) to keep up the momentum...

- **Make use of their interests**– if they are football-mad, why not see if they want to write a profile on their favourite footballer? Writing about their passions could be key to unlocking their inner author!
- **Don't worry too much about spelling mistakes**– mistakes are part of learning, it's making the effort that counts



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- **Remember to praise their efforts**– display special pieces on the fridge or even frame them to encourage them to keep going
- **Review progress**– keep a portfolio of their writing at home so you can monitor their progress. Talk about what was challenging or enjoyable and reflect on how much their writing has improved over time

How to encourage reluctant writers

Reluctant writers might need a little more encouragement or a change of approach. Getting to the root of why they don't enjoy writing could help you to find new ways to motivate them. For example, it could be something they find challenging that's stopping them from writing creatively.

Keep things interesting by writing in different ways;

- Write on a whiteboard
- Use wide lined paper
- Write on a tablet or keyboard
- Use different pens or pencils

How to encourage writing in early years

For young children, we recommend turning writing activities into games and working in short, manageable bursts to keep their attention switched on.

Ensuring they are comfortable with the foundations of writing (forming letters, motor skills and simple sentence structure) is key, before moving on to more advanced activities.