

The world of words



Learning to write and spell are two key skills your children will learn and develop during their early years at school. They develop these skills by reading and watching other people write. As they become more confident, they begin to recognise words, talk about letters and sounds, and make out patterns.

What can I do?

Children who are confident with writing and spelling have a great start to school. You can help your children gain this confidence by doing these simple activities at home.

1. Kindergarten: Children begin to experiment with forming letters and learn that printed words carry a message. Have fun playing games with letters and words. Just a minute or two regularly works best at this young age.

- Read alphabet books, story books and nursery rhymes to your children. Point to words that are easily matched to a picture, such as *cat* and *hat*.
- Help your children recognise their names. Start with just the first letter. Point it out when you see it in another word.
- Write words together. Help them trace over words with their fingers while you say each letter out loud.
- As you are reading, talk about words together. Ask questions, for example: *What is the longest word on the page?*

2. Pre-primary: Children learn more about spelling and start to understand the connection between sounds and letters. They begin to write the most obvious sounds in a word such as *WT* for *went* and *KTN* for *kitten*. They can also spell some words they know such as *the* and *to*.

- Set up a home message board and write messages to your children. Encourage them to leave messages too.
- Write shopping lists with your children. Talk about what you are doing and writing.
- Make use of junk mail by asking children to:
 - circle words that have a certain letter such as *M* and a certain sound like *SH*
 - underline all two letter words, three letter words and so on
 - count how many times they can find a certain word such as *the* as this helps them recognise common words.



The 26 letters in the English alphabet stand for 44 different sounds. For example the letter *A* makes a different sound in *apple*, *craft*, *any* and *apron*.

3. Years 1 and 2: As your children progress through school they develop a bank of words they recognise by sight. They are also able to match letters with sounds and sound out words they don't know.

- Ask your children to 'have a go' at spelling words before giving them the correct answer.
- See how many words can be made from one large word like *together* using only the letters in that word. For example: *he, get, greet, there* and *other*.
- Ask your children to keep a diary during the holidays. Get them to write something in it each day. Add and caption photographs. Decorate the pages together.
- Help your children write lists when they play, for example shopping lists.

It is important to give your children lots of praise when they are learning to write and spell. Praise them for 'having a go' even if they get the spelling wrong. Some children need lots of practise and encouragement.

Fun activities

1. Play What word am I? Think of a word, for example: *holiday*. Fill in one letter in the right place, for example _ _ L _ _ _ . Ask them to guess what the word might be. If their guess is incorrect, fill in another letter, for example H _ L _ _ _ . Keep going until they guess the word.
2. Play Word Detective. Ask your children questions like *Which word rhymes with boat?* and *What word is opposite to long?*



Write spelling rules on pieces of paper and stick them around your home so your children see them every day.

