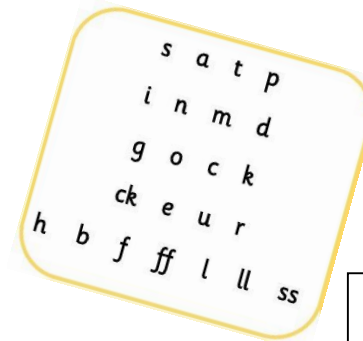


Supporting literacy development at home



The building blocks for literacy come from speaking and listening. In the EYFS curriculum, the prime area of learning - Communication & Language - is of optimum importance for success in phonics, reading and writing as your child progresses through their school life. Literacy is known as a Specific area of learning. Strong foundations need to be embedded in communication and language first.

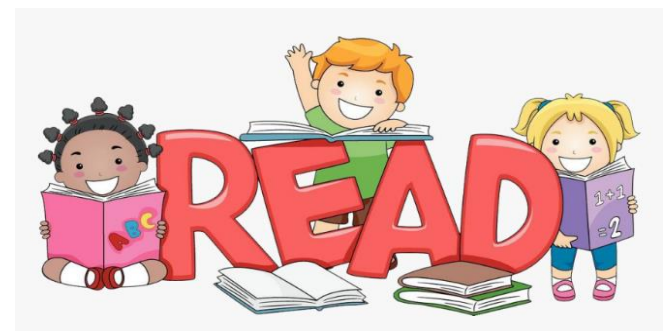


Activities for building listening skills will aid children's literacy development by helping them to tune in to the rhythm of speech and the sounds in words. When children have well-developed listening and speaking skills, they will be able to progress at their own pace to learn about letters and sounds. This is called 'phonics.' We read by recognising sounds within words and we write by placing those sounds together to form words. Children need to be able to distinguish between general sounds before they begin to link specific sounds to letters so tune in to the world around you as you walk to school together. Really listen! How many different sounds can you both hear and identify?

The building blocks for writing are physical development, particularly fine motor skills. Before a child can hold a pencil, they need to develop strength and control in their hands. They also need to have developed self-confidence and the ability to persevere to attempt this new skill. Once again, this shows the value of ensuring your child has a secure foundation in the Prime areas of learning and development before rushing ahead.

Children need to gain confidence when beginning to create marks on paper. It is important that all attempts to write are encouraged and praised by adults and in the early stages this may look like a 'scribble' which the child assigns meaning to by calling it a 'list' or 'writing'. Children will be more likely to make marks and attempt to write letters if they see adults regularly writing too rather than typing. Writing does not need to be on paper to be worthwhile and it is often better for their confidence to start encouraging them to form the shapes of letters in less permanent ways such as in the air, using their finger to trace through materials or using a paintbrush with water.

It is also important to model the correct way rather than telling a child they have written a letter wrong and/or rubbing away their efforts. This is demoralising, as it would be for an adult when learning a new skill



What can you do at home?

Rather than a list of must-do activities, you can dip in and out of these prompts and ideas based on your child's current interests and appropriate stage of development.

Phonics

- Read to your child. It is important to keep enjoying books together. This helps your child to learn the rhythm and order of stories. It also helps with their vocabulary development for writing and builds their imagination.
- Joining in with stories and songs can be a great way to support children. When you are reading to your child, ask them to join in with phrases that are repeated, for example, "Run, run, as fast as you can! You can't catch me, I'm the Gingerbread Man!" Traditional stories such as 'The Gingerbread Man' and 'The Three Little Pigs' often have repeated phrases and children will love doing the voices.
- "I Spy" is great for identifying and hearing initial sounds in words. It helps your child to tune in to the beginning of words and identify the sound. Play it at home, on a walk, in the car...anywhere!
- Listen to your child read. Once they are ready, your child will start bringing books home to read. Try to find time to hear them read every day. It could be snuggled up on the sofa, at bedtime or before school.
- Say the sounds correctly at any given opportunity for your child to hear. In all games and activities, make sure you pronounce speech sounds clearly. There are videos online that will help you to check this and also on our website <https://boyne.secure-primariesite.net/english-4/>
- Play rhyming games with children, for example, play a game of 'silly soup' and pretend to put in objects that rhyme (such as a bat, a hat, a cat, a mat). Play this with your child and then see if they can do it independently.

Reading

- Reread your child's favourite stories as many times as your child wants to hear them. Choose books and authors that your child enjoys.
- Sit close together and get comfy. You could encourage your child to hold the book themselves and turn the pages. Use funny voices, puppets or props to bring the story alive.
- Ask questions when you are reading together such as "What can you see on this page?", "How do you think the characters feel?" and "What is the story about?"
- Visit the local library together. It is fun choosing new books to read. Keep an eye out for special story events at the library or local bookshops that you can join in with.
- Look at the pictures and talk about them, for example, "Can you find a bird or a cat?", "What else can you see?", "What are the children playing? Have you played that before?"
- Encourage family and friends to share books with your child. The more your child sees you and others reading, the more they will want to read too. This can be in any language - we want to foster a love of reading.
- There is an 'early reading strategies' poster in the front of the yellow reading record book. Use this as a guide each time you sit to read with your child.

Writing

- Fine motor and hand-eye coordination will develop through lots of activities that use pinching, grasping, twisting, threading, squashing and squeezing. Activities such as threading, weaving and manipulating small items with tweezers will all help build fine motor control. Playdough is also a great finger-strengthening activity, as is using scissors.
- Drawing is a very good entry point for handwriting as it gives children an opportunity to practise guiding a pencil. They can follow a simple guide or use their imagination to draw.
- Making marks is often where early writing starts. Sensory opportunities are an excellent way to make writing fun and exciting. You could squirt shaving foam onto a smooth surface and add some paint. Children can spread the shaving foam and mix it with the paint. They can make marks in the shaving foam with their fingers, sticks, feathers or with paintbrushes. Provide letters or patterns for your child to copy. Start with the letters from your child's name and move on to initial sounds.
- Writing letters in sand, water or paint (or on whiteboards and chalkboards) is a great way to practise letter formation. Pattern books can also be fun to do and allow children to practise mark making.
- Go shopping and let your child write a small part of your shopping list. Give your child the list while you are there for them to find the items and add them to the trolley. You might help them to form the letters or write it together so it gives meaning to making marks.