



How to help your child develop their writing skills

Writing

3 main skills/attitudes:

Letter formation

- Fine motor skills - being able to pick up small objects between finger and thumb
- Gross motor skills - strength in shoulder
- Hold pencil correctly - pincer grasp
- Start the letter in the correct place
- Go round the letter in the right direction

Understanding how to write a sentence

There are many skills involved that we take for granted because we have been doing it for so long. But for the children it's all new, and there's a lot to learn:

- Deciding what I want to say before I begin to write
- Where to start writing
- Remember what the first word was - listen for sounds in the word, is it a word I already know?
- Leave a space before I begin to write the next word, otherwise it will look like one big long word and nobody will be able to read it
- Say the sentence again - remember what I've already written, decide what is the next word is, listen for the sounds again
- Where to go when you reach the end of the line
- Read the whole sentence. Did it make sense? Did I miss any words out? Put a full stop at the end.

Seeing themselves as writers

We want children to be able to write for a variety of purposes

- *Functional writing*: lists, letters, signs, recipes, cards

How can you help?

Letting your child see you write (shopping list, note to Dad to tell him that you've gone round to see a friend, post it note on the fridge to buy more milk)

Pointing out environmental print (road names, shops signs, names of train stations etc)

- *Imaginative writing* - stories, poems and songs.

We want children to become imaginative storytellers and eventually as they progress through the school - imaginative story writers.

This is where imaginative play and sharing stories are invaluable. Children can't write stories if they don't hear stories.

The more stories that children hear, then the more story book language they absorb - especially from traditional tales - phrases such as "once upon a time", "happily ever after" and expressions such as "burst into tears" instead of just "cried".

Through hearing lots of stories, children become aware of the different kinds of characters that you meet in a story, and of the kinds of adventures and misadventure that characters have. Children soak up this knowledge and use the words and ideas that they've heard in stories, as well as their own personal experiences, when they begin to create stories themselves.