

Reading and writing

Drawing and writing

Early writing

As children begin to write and draw, they begin to understand how ideas are communicated. Encouraging early writing helps to boost children's interest in letters and words, and develops their understanding of the link between sounds and letters of the alphabet.

As a first step, you can encourage your child to draw to:

- stimulate ideas for writing
- build skills for moving the pen/pencils with control
- develop small muscle control in fingers needed to form letters
- add details to make ideas clearer.

How do children begin to explore writing?

- Role-play writing – using lines or squiggles to show the 'action' of writing
- Alphabetic writing – using strings of letters and 'letter-like' symbols
- Copied writing – copying letters/words written by an adult, displayed or found in books
- Writing letters of the alphabet from the sounds they hear in words

Praise your child when they show interest in writing or ask you to write something for them.

Acknowledge your child's efforts when they 'have a go' at writing by themselves. This may include 'scribbles', lines, shapes, letter/number-like symbols, or copied letters/numbers/words.

Talk to your child about their writing (e.g. *I can see you've used some letters from your name in your writing.*). Ask them if they would like you to write below in your 'adult' writing.

Stimulating opportunities for writing

- Provide materials to encourage writing (e.g. range of paper/notepads and pencils/pens, chalk and blackboard, pavement chalk, markers and a whiteboard/laminated card).
- Write for a purpose as part of play, such as creating signs, labels or tickets, making lists or menus.

- Use 'real-life' opportunities for your child to write (e.g. emails/letters/birthday cards, shopping lists, signs or labels).

Talking as you write

'Talking as you write' in everyday situations helps your child to understand why and how we write. As you write, it is important to 'talk out loud' about what you are doing and why.

Supporting your child's learning about writing

- Talk with your child about why you write things down (e.g. lists, emails/letters, reminder notes, instructions).
- Write down your child's ideas, thoughts, plans and observations. As you write, talk about one or two ideas about letters, words or sentences. Avoid talking about every letter/word, as your child may 'switch off' or become confused.
- Make links to letters/words your child may already know or be interested in (e.g. letters in their name or on favourite signs).
- Talk about some of the main letters and sounds you can hear in words (e.g. *Can you hear the 'd' sound at the beginning of the word Dad? I write the 'd' sound using the letter 'D'.*).
- Have an alphabet chart close and point to the picture clue, or the letter you are writing down (e.g. *I'm writing the letter 's'. It makes the 'ssss' sound, as in s-s-S-am.*).
- Encourage your child to become aware of 'printed words'. Point to the words as you 'read back' writing. This helps your child to understand that words can be written down and read.
- Help your child to count the number of words in a sentence, or identify the longest/shortest words. This helps them to look for 'word boundaries' – spaces between words.
- Talk about the 'rules' of writing (e.g. *When I write, I start on the top, left-hand side of the page and move across to the right.*).



Letters, sounds and words

Talking about letters, sounds and words helps children to learn what our alphabetic symbols mean. Kindergarten children may not need to know the names of letters and their sounds, but need to learn that 'letters are used to write down the sounds you hear in words'. They may also learn the name or sound of letters that mean something to them (e.g. letters at the start of family members' names).

It also helps children to build a language for talking about texts (e.g. they learn to use the words 'letter', 'word', 'sound', 'sentence', 'space', 'full stop').

Talking about letters, sounds and words works best:

- when your child shows interest (e.g. they ask: *What does that say? Is that 'one' (letter) in my name?*)
- for real purposes (e.g. when you need to write a message to another family member, or your child wants to make a sign for a building/game)
- when it is useful to understand the meaning of a word or sign, and how the words and pictures 'work together' to 'tell' the story/share information (e.g. a 'do not walk' sign at a crossing, the symbols indicating male/female bathrooms, a 'stop' sign).

Your child may also be learning the letters/sounds in their home/first language. To be successful in school, it is important to explore the letters and sounds used in Standard Australian English.

Ways to talk about letters, sounds and words

- Talk about 'words' on the front covers/titles of texts (e.g. *Let's look at the front cover of the book. Show me where the words are written. This is the title of the story and this is the name of the author. I'll read the words to you.*)
- Help your child to identify starting sounds and letters of words that mean something to them (e.g. *Here's a picture of a truck. Let's find the word 'truck'. I can hear a 't' sound at the beginning of truck. We write the 't' sound using the letter 't'.*)
- Draw attention to links between images and words when reading (e.g. *The word says 'dinosaur' and matches the picture of the dinosaur. Let's find another word that matches a picture.*)
- Talk about letters and sounds in a range of everyday situations and make links to your child's interests and experiences (e.g. *Let's find the milk. 'MMMMilk starts with 'm', like your name.*)
- Take an interest in the 'squiggles' or letter-like symbols your child writes. Listen to your child as they talk about their writing or 'read' their writing. Praise them when they try to 'write' (e.g. *Great writing! I see you have been copying some letters. Can you 'read' your writing to me?*).



For further information, visit www.qld.gov.au/kindy

Disclaimer: the information in this resource sheet is offered as a guide only, and should not be treated as an exhaustive statement on the subject.