

Supporting Writing

Try as much as possible to make a link between reading and writing. Share stories and nursery rhymes together and talk with your children about what they like/dislike about characters and stories. How do parts of the story make them feel? How do they think the characters feel? What might happen next? Does it remind them of other stories?

Use real, practical experiences to promote writing. For example if your child is interested in pirates, monsters, superheroes, castles or explorers (etc) you could build a den together or make a costume and then talk with your child about what they would like to say about it. You can then work with them to say sentences and sound out some simple words. They might prefer to draw a picture of what they have made or imagined and then write a few labels about it. Perhaps you could make a play shop or cafe together and write a list of things that are on sale.

Use fun activities which develop coordination and hand strength such as cutting, painting, using pegs and playing with play dough.

Praise all efforts at writing. All marks that children make with the intention of drawing or writing are of value. Painting with water on a fence, making circular or zig zag marks with chalks or paints all help to develop the necessary skills for writing. Vary the surfaces that they experiment with writing on. You might have old bricks, roof tiles, slate, wood, pebbles or stones in the garden which keep things interesting.

You could encourage your child to find sounds in a magazine and cut them out. They can then try to arrange them into words and stick them onto paper.

It is important that children rehearse saying aloud what they want to write. If your child is finding it difficult to think of what to say you could suggest a few words for the beginning of a sentence and encourage them to finish the sentence verbally. When they have said a sentence that they like they will be more excited about writing it down.

Children may be able to focus for a limited amount of time on writing, particularly at the early stages. Try to keep things positive and praise all achievements. It's better to come back to an activity later in the day/week or leave it altogether than create a stressful situation for yourself and your child!

More confident writers can use all of the same strategies to keep things interesting but they may be able to write more independently and for a longer period of time. Encourage them to sound out unfamiliar words and think about how they can make their sentences more interesting. Could they describe things more accurately ('the castle walls' or 'the towering castle walls' or 'the crumbling castle walls?'). You could give them some suggestions such as using coordination (and, but, so, because) and adverbs (quickly, slowly, carefully etc) on a word mat to see if they can use them independently in their writing.

Children can be encouraged to look back at the writing they have done. Again, praise their achievements and enjoys their ideas together. You could also encourage them to look for some 'amazing mistakes' such as missing capital letters, letter reversals, common misspelling such as sed/said. Children often enjoy the sense of achievement they get from a little time spent on editing, as long as it is a positive experience.

Finally celebrate your child's achievements. You could post a picture onto the Virtual Vallis group, make a video of your child reading their work or send it to a family member or friend.