



Lawn Primary and Nursery School

Parent Advice Sheet

Suggestions for Supporting a Child Who Finds Writing Difficult

Writing can be a challenge for many children, but with the right strategies, it is possible to improve.

The English language is tricky and there have been lots of influences on our language. There are rules and then exceptions to the rules, there are letters or groups of letters which represent different sounds in different words and there are many words that cannot be spelt using our phonics code.

The sounds we hear are called phonemes and the sounds we write are called graphemes. Some phonemes can be represented by many different graphemes eg the sound "s" can be written as s, c, ce, se or ss.

Below are some fun and effective suggestions that can help your child become more confident and successful in their writing journey:

1. Create a Supportive Writing Environment

- **Quiet Space:** Ensure a quiet, comfortable space with minimal distractions.
- **Time Limitations:** Break writing tasks into smaller, manageable chunks. Allow breaks to avoid frustration.
- **Positive Reinforcement:** Praise effort, not just the final product. Encourage perseverance.
- **Hand strength :** Encourage good fine motor skills with the use of threading, playdough, tweezers to move things eg pompoms, pasta, rice, beads etc.
- **Pencil Grips :** Some children benefit from the use of pencil grips.
- **Implement :** Try a range of pens and pencils. We all have a favourite type of pen! Try an ergonomic pen or pencil.
- **Letter formation :** Ensure your child knows the correct letter formation – ask your teacher if unsure. Each letter has a story in Read Write Inc.
- **Ascenders and Descenders :** Ensure your child knows which letters are tall and which have tails. Always practice on lined paper. Use a highlighter to show the where small letters sit – and this will guide where ascenders and descenders must extend.
- **Upper and lower case :** Ensure your child can write each letter in upper and lower case.

2. Develop Pre-Writing Skills

- **Talking and Brainstorming:** Have the child talk out ideas before writing. This can be done through conversations, drawing, or mind mapping.
- **Graphic Organizers:** Use visual tools like mind maps, story webs, or outlines to help organize thoughts before writing.
- **Draw First:** If the child is more comfortable drawing, start by drawing the scene or ideas. Writing can follow the picture.

- **Word Banks:** Provide lists of words related to the topic to help the child feel confident when they start writing.

3. Writing Tools and Aids

- **Assistive Technology:** Use speech-to-text programs to help translate spoken words into written text.
- **Word Processors:** Allow the child to use a computer or tablet for writing, as it can be easier to edit and rearrange text.
- **Sentence Starters:** Offer sentence starters to help them begin, such as "I think that..." or "The best part of my day was..."
- **Dictation Tools:** Let the child dictate their thoughts to you or a voice recorder, and then transcribe their words.

4. Focus on Process, Not Perfection

- **Plan what they are going to write :** Try using Popplet to support to develop planning skills.
- **First Draft, Then Edit:** Emphasize the importance of a first draft and let the child know it doesn't have to be perfect. Editing comes later.
- **Writing in Stages:** Break the writing process down into stages (brainstorming, drafting, revising, editing, and sharing). Focus on one stage at a time.
- **Chunk Writing:** Encourage short bursts of writing (e.g., writing for 10 minutes at a time), instead of expecting long periods of continuous writing.
- **Purpose :** Give the child a purpose for writing – eg a shopping list or a letter to a friend or relation, a set of instructions, a complaint letter etc. Be creative!
- **Opportunities :** Give the child lots of opportunities to have go at writing.

5. Use Visual and Sensory Techniques

- **Picture Prompts:** Use pictures to inspire writing. Ask the child to describe what they see or create a story based on the image.
- **Experience :** Give the child an experience eg make a cake or walk in the park, and then get them to write about it.
- **Tactile Experiences:** Sometimes, using objects or movement (e.g., using clay or writing in sand) can stimulate creativity before writing down ideas.
- **Storybooks:** Read books together, and discuss the structure of the story. Ask the child to retell the story in their own words.

6. Support in Grammar and Structure

- **Simplified Writing Tasks:** Start with simple tasks like writing a sentence or a paragraph. Gradually increase the complexity as the child builds confidence.
- **Use of Templates:** Provide writing templates or examples to guide sentence structure and content (e.g., a fill-in-the-blank story format).
- **Focus on Key Ideas:** Help the child focus on expressing one main idea clearly instead of worrying about grammar at the early stages.

7. Encourage Creative Writing and Expression

- **Story Creation:** Encourage the child to create their own stories, either through written words or through other forms such as comics or picture books.
- **Writing Games:** Use fun writing activities like “finish the story” prompts or writing challenges. You can also get story dice or story cards to help promote ideas.
- **Journals:** Encourage daily or weekly journal writing, where the child writes whatever they like, without worrying about rules.

8. Foster a Growth Mindset

- **Emphasise Effort:** Reinforce the idea that writing is a skill that improves with practice.
- **Normalise Mistakes:** Encourage the child to view mistakes as part of the learning process. Writing is a journey, not a final product. Model making mistakes yourself!
- **Set Small Goals:** Help the child set achievable goals, like writing one paragraph or completing a list of sentences.

9. Provide Regular Feedback

- **Highlight Strengths:** Begin feedback by highlighting what the child did well (e.g., great vocabulary, good structure).
- **Constructive Criticism:** When offering feedback, focus on one specific area for improvement (e.g., "Let's add a few more details here to make your story more interesting").
- **Self-Reflection:** Encourage the child to look over their writing and identify areas they think they did well and areas they want to improve.

10. Collaborate with Teachers

- **Support Plan: Refer to their support plan (if they have one) and strategies being used in school**
- **Individualised Support:** Ask the child's teacher about accommodations (e.g., extra time, assistance with spelling, or note-taking).
- **Frequent Check-Ins:** Meet regularly with the teacher to track the child's progress and adjust strategies as needed.

Additional Activities to Help Build Writing Skills

- **Handwriting Practice:** If the child struggles with handwriting, consider using resources like handwriting worksheets, or allow the use of a keyboard.
- **Storytelling:** Encourage verbal storytelling and ask the child to retell stories in their own words, which can then be written down.
- **Reading:** Read together regularly. Hearing well-structured sentences and stories helps build an understanding of language.
- **Write Together:** Work on writing projects side by side, offering guidance as needed, and allowing the child to see the process in action.
- **Call Scotland :** Call Scotland is a useful website giving lots of guidance and advice. Their wheel of apps tells you which apps support each area of literacy and should be helpful when considering future support. Look under the information tab.

This sheet is meant to be a flexible, supportive guide that can be tailored to fit the child's unique needs. Writing should be an enjoyable process that builds gradually over time, with the child's confidence growing as they develop their skills