

Writing: How to help at home

In its simplest form writing is just talk written down. One of the greatest things you can do to support your child in learning to be a great writer is to support them in learning to be a great talker. All of the times you share together in your normal day-to-day life are opportunities to:



Do ... even the simplest tasks, jobs, activities that you do are rich with the potential for language.



Notice ... look closely, try to notice all the details. What do you see at first, and what do you see if you look more closely?



Talk, talk, talk ... say what you see, hear, smell, taste, feel and what you think of it. Have an opinion, and explain it. Tell stories about the things you have done. Use different words to label the things we see, play with the ways we describe them.



Be curious ... ask questions and wonder out loud – I wonder if...? I wonder why...? What might happen if...? What about ...?

How is spelling learned?

Before children can learn to spell they have to develop an awareness that words are made up of sounds – this is called ‘phonological awareness’. There are four levels of phonological awareness:

Level 1	Word	bed	black	napkin
Level 2	Syllable	bed	black	nap-kin
Level 3	Onset-rime	b-ed	bl-ack	n-ap k-in
Level 4	Phonemes	/b/-/e/-/d/	/b/-/l/-/a/-/ck/	/n/-/a/-/p/-/k/-/i/-/n/

There are approximately 41 phonemes in spoken English, represented by the 26 letters of the alphabet singly or in combinations. One letter may have more than one phoneme; for example, the letter c has two phonemes: /k/ (as in cat) and /s/(as in city).

What can you do to help at home?

Syllables	Rhyming words	Onset-rime	Phonemes
Tap out and count the syllables in words.	Nursery rhymes, rhyming stories, (e.g. Dr. Seuss) and songs/rap all use rhyme. Notice the rhyming words and say them out loud.	The ability to detect rhyming words is part of onset–rime awareness.	Isolating phonemes: “What is the first sound in bed?” (/b/)
Say a word as syllable segments (news/pa/per, com/pu/ter) and have the learners repeat the word back, first in the segments then as the whole word.			Identifying common phonemes: “What is the sound that is the same in bed, boy and back?” (/b/)
Complete a word when only a part is given (for example, say table when the first part only is said, “ta-”).	Add a rhyming word to a list (for example, hair, chair, bear, fair), and	Play with (manipulate) the parts of word, (for example, changing the /th/ of thing to /s/, /cl/, /w/, /sh/ to form sing, cling, wing, shing; changing the /ing/ of thing to /ick/, /ink/, /og/ to form thick, think, thog).	Categorising phonemes: “Which word does not belong?” bike, car, bus (car)
Identify syllables that are the same or different in words (for example, the “tel/e” in television, telephone; the “day” in Monday, Saturday, birthday).	Identify the odd word out in a list of rhyming words, (for example, fit, hot, sit).		Segmenting phonemes: “What sounds can you hear in bag?” (/b/ /a/ /g/)
			Blending phonemes: “What word is made with these sounds: /m/ /a/ /t/?” (mat).
			Deleting phonemes: “Say not. Now say it again without the /n/.” (/ot/).

Adapted from: ‘Starting Points: Supporting the Learning Progressions for Adult Literacy’, <http://www.literacyandnumeracyforadults.com/resources/354576>, accessed 26 August, 2013

Focus on words and sounds that come up in the everyday talk you have. Keep it fun!