

Becoming a writer

Children begin to learn about writing when they see other people writing – and reading – in lots of different everyday situations. They gradually come to understand that writing is spoken words written down, and that different sounds are represented by different written letters.



When children understand that writing has a purpose and see it being used in meaningful ways, they are more likely to become writers themselves.

Stages of writing

Children move through stages when they learn to write:

- Writing begins when children realise that they can deliberately make marks and that those marks can mean something.
- Early writing is made up of random lines and shapes as children experiment using fingers, paints, water, crayons etc.
- When children realise that writing is different from drawing, they start to make marks that look like writing. At this stage, they start to talk about what their squiggles, shapes and lines mean – *“My shopping list has bananas”, “It’s a letter to granny and a kiss”*.
- In time, they start to use some recognisable letter shapes, often from their own name.
- Finally they learn to write letters and shapes that look like letters, and go in the right direction on the page.



Becoming a writer takes a lot of effort and concentration. It takes a *long* time and *lots* of practice for children to progress from squiggly lines and blobs to the straight lines and curves that form letters.

Becoming a writer

Learning to write is a complex and gradual process. To become a writer, children need to develop the skills to hold a pencil, use a piece of paper and make their marks go in one particular direction. They will also learn about the shapes of letters, the sounds they represent and how they blend together to form words.

Children learn about writing gradually.

As children learn to write letter shapes and words, they will:

- develop the physical strength, skills and co-ordination to be able to control a pen or pencil
- begin to recognise the sounds that letter shapes represent, and how to combine those letters to make words.

It takes children a *long* time to develop the understanding and skills they will need to become writers.

Encouraging early writing

At first, children's 'writing' may look like a scribble of random letter shapes, squiggles and marks. Although they may not make much sense to you, they are likely to be meaningful to your child.

Your child will enjoy explaining what their marks mean and – if they want you to – you can model writing by jotting down their message next to the marks they have made. When you take an interest in your child's writing they will want to continue experimenting.



As their skills and understanding grow you may notice your child start to use letter shapes and letter sounds when exploring writing.

The first words most children want to write are their own names and those of their close family.

My stationery pack!

Children need *lots* of opportunities to write and *lots* of practice.

Your child will enjoy having their own selection of writing materials to explore mark making and ‘writing’ in their own way. Here are some ideas of things to include:

- lots of paper and card – plain, lines, coloured – scrap paper is ideal, like the back of old letters
- homemade books – a few pages folded over together
- blank forms – from the bank, post office, travel agents or mail order catalogues
- old envelopes, greeting cards, diaries and calendars
- sticky labels, scissors, sticky tape, glue, stickers
- a variety of coloured pens, pencils, chalks and crayons.



Encourage your child to use their stationery pack whenever writing is needed – perhaps to:

- write a shopping list, a menu for dinner, a list of things to take on holiday, a short message or a letter to someone etc.
- copy you filling out a form, or write down a short story.

Don't forget to join in! The more children see you writing, the more they will want to do the same.



Helping children become writers

Here are some of the things that help children to become writers, and how you can support your child:

Things that help children become writers	Things you can do to help
Having the confidence to 'have a go' at writing	Recognise your child's efforts – praise and encourage them and help them to develop a positive attitude towards writing.
Strength and control in their fingers, wrists, arms and shoulders	Provide activities to develop these muscles such as going to the park, doing finger rhymes and playing with playdough or sand.
An interest in writing, words and letters	Talk to your child about words, letters and print all around them. Involve them when you are writing for a purpose such as making a shopping list.
Lots of practice in making marks	Provide opportunities to explore mark making and 'writing' using a variety of tools and materials.
Being aware of sounds and letters	Sing songs and rhymes, pointing out letters and sounds that are important to your child such as the first letter of their name.



Enjoy exploring writing together!