

Exploring writing through play

Children often make their first attempts at writing when they are playing – perhaps as they make notes about their ‘injured’ toy, or when they take orders for drinks at a teddy bear’s tea party. Exploring writing when they are playing is a great way for children to develop their writing skills and have fun at the same time!

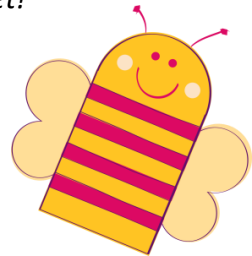


Playing together

Children learn about writing by seeing those around them write – they learn that writing is important and they begin to get an idea about why it is useful.

Playing with your child is a great opportunity to show them different ways that writing can be used – perhaps to leave clues in a treasure hunt or write down their order as you pretend to be a waiter. It’s also helpful to talk out loud about what you are doing – *I’m just going to write down your score so we don’t forget!*

Seeing you writing will encourage your child to have a go and write something too!



Marks and scribbles

Your child’s early marks, squiggles or random letter shapes may not make much sense to you, but they will be meaningful to your child and they will enjoy telling you about them if you ask. If they want you to, you can model writing by jotting down their message next to the marks that they have made.

Being interested in your child’s writing will show them that you value their efforts and will encourage them to continue exploring writing.

Ideas for exploring writing through play

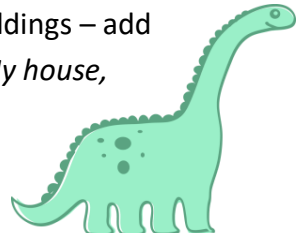
Children are naturally curious about their world and love to play in lots of different ways. Many play activities provide opportunities for children to explore writing and for them to write with a purpose.



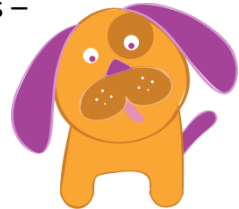
It can help to think about how your child likes to play – they are more likely to want to explore writing if it's related to something that they are interested in.

Here are some ideas:

Ways to play	Ideas for writing
toy tea parties or picnics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - small books for toys to read - label the picnic food and drinks
cars and garages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - signs and labels to direct the traffic - road signs – <i>Give Way, Stop</i> - petrol pump and car wash signs and prices
trains and stations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - train tickets - station signs and a timetable
small world play such as farms, zoos, dinosaurs or dolls houses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - make a play mat from a large fabric sheet or flattened cardboard box – draw fields, tracks, roads, animal enclosures etc. then write names for the roads and enclosures. - use recycled boxes for houses, barns, cages and other buildings – add labels and signs – <i>My house, Police station, cow shed, Beware of the dinosaurs!</i>



Ways to play	Ideas for writing
playing shops	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - price labels and signs e.g. special offers - pretend money - 'open' and 'closed' signs
being a waiter/ waitress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - a menu with your child's favourite food and drinks – and prices - notepads for taking orders - name badge
being an explorer or adventurer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - a list of things to take/pack - a map or treasure map! - a journal to record what you find – perhaps a list of mini beasts to look for
running a pet shop	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - make a pet shop with recycled boxes for cages – create sign and labels for the animals and whether they bite!
being a doctor, nurse or vet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - create simple forms for your child to complete for their patients – you could include <i>age</i>, <i>name</i>, <i>blood pressure</i>, <i>injury</i>, <i>diagnosis</i> (and <i>animal</i> if you are a vet!)



Children enjoy pretending to be a writer.

Making things and writing

Children love making things – modelling, gluing, sticking, drawing and painting. Writing can become part of these activities too.

When children are making pictures and models with paper and odds and ends, they might want to write:

- their name – *Anil's model*
- a message – *For Granny, love Kirsty*
- an instruction – *Keep out! Please don't touch!*
- a story about their model or picture – *One sunny day...*
- special words which they use when they play with their models – *Go, Stop*
- labels for their special things – *Zoe's book box*

Children love gluing, sticking, drawing, painting... and writing.

Developing early writing skills

Experimenting and practising writing as part of their play helps children to develop the understanding and skills they will need to become writers. When they play at writing children are:

- developing the muscles they need to hold and control a pencil
- beginning to recognise letter shapes and to connect letters and sounds
- learning that their marks and writing can mean something and send messages
- recognising that writing is useful
- gaining the confidence to 'have a go' at writing



Children learn a lot about writing while they are playing.