

The Orchard School



Helping with writing
at home

Writing tips

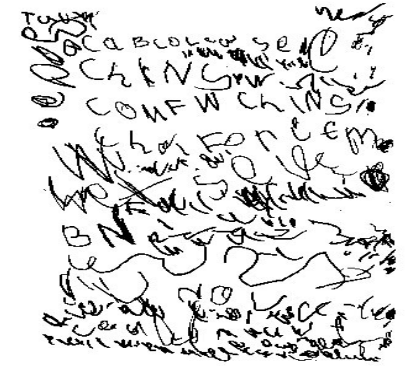
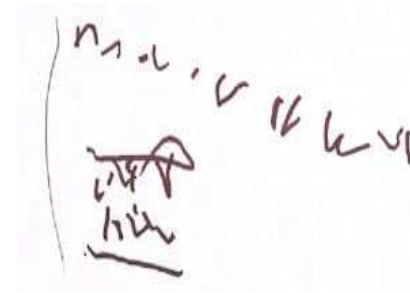
At the Orchard we want children to enjoy writing and to see it as useful and meaningful in their everyday lives.

Start with talking - Thinking clearly and knowing how to express our ideas is tricky for children. The best way to get there is to talk to your child and, crucially, listen when they speak. Before anything can be written, it must be spoken first.

Drawing - One of the first means of communication for your child is through drawing. Talk to them about their picture, encourage them to sign it and maybe even write a caption.

Emergent writing - Children learn to use mark making materials and gradually are able to produce patterns and pictures. These patterns and pictures are important and meaningful to the child. Ask your child about these and write

the message they want underneath. Help your child to read back what has been written to show that writing has meaning.



As children see and discover more about the world around them they begin to notice more about the writing in their environment. They will start to recognise different letters and use these in their emergent writing.



Provide opportunities for writing - Try to provide a small writing and drawing area for your child somewhere in your

home. Ideally they would be able to sit at this whenever they want and have access to scrap paper, pencils, crayons, felt tips, scissors, selloptape or glue. You will be surprised how much time children will spend at this writing 'table'.

Involve children in writing that you do - Children see adults writing lists, letters, notes to themselves and want to imitate this. Encourage them to contribute to making a list or give him / her paper to scribble lists alongside you.

Read to your child - Reading can stimulate your child's imagination, increase their vocabulary and encourage them to write. A favourite book is often learned by heart and your child may begin to recognise that the print tells a story. The more books you can share with your child, the more she/he will begin to understand about writing and words.

Keeping it real - If children can see that writing has a real purpose they are far more likely to be interested in mastering it. Encourage your child to write for a purpose by involving them in writing cards, lists, shopping lists, to do lists, holiday scrapbooks, my book about...).

The idea's the thing - Praise all attempts at writing, recognising the meaning as the most important element.

Always read the content of the writing first and value the meaning your child wants to convey.

Reluctant writers - Even the most reluctant writers enjoy new kinds of writing. Encourage your child to write or draw as part of their play (pirates need treasure maps, astronauts need a list of things to take in their rocket etc). Make writing FUN. Your child could draw on the ground outside with chalks or with soapy water and a paint brush.

Confident writers - Don't point out every mistake your child makes when they write. Children need encouragement and positive reinforcement to be confident. Maybe pick out one or two words or letters you could practise again at the end together.

Fine motor skills - The first stage in learning to write includes the development of manipulative skills.

Ideas for activities

- Threading cotton reels, beads, pasta, buttons
- Playdough
- Puzzles

- *Drawing, painting, finger painting, dot to dots, tracing*
- *Peg boards*
- *Pegging out the washing*
- *Construction toys (Duplo, lego)*



- *Doing up buttons and zips*
- *Letter shapes in the sand*
- *Cutting*



- *Using salad tongs / large tweezers to pick up smaller objects.*
- *Whiteboards and pens*

Don't forget gross motor skills too!

- *Playing outdoors*
- *Throwing and catching*
- *Play 'Simon Says'*
- *Riding a bike*

Sounding it out – Encourage your child to sound out words using their phonic knowledge (robot talk = sh-o-p, b-a-ck). Praise attempts at words to give your child the confidence to write for him / herself. At this stage of development, letters will be missing and your child may have to 'translate' for you.

Spelling (key words) suggestions

- *Praise all attempts.*
- *Use magnetic letters to spell words*
- *Encourage use of word banks and print around them in books and the environment.*
- *Finding smaller words within words*
- *Play silly rhyming word games to encourage correct spelling of word families (e.g. cat, sat, rat)*
- *Pick out 1 or 2 key words to work on together*
- *Making sentences using key word cards*

Make handwriting FUN too! – Children to not just have to practise their letter formation using pencil and paper.

Encourage children to write their letters in the air, in sand, in cornflour, finger painting, paintbrush and soapy water outside, using felt tips on large paper etc.

Make use of ICT - Provide opportunities for your child to word process lists, notes etc. This takes the pressure of putting pen to paper. Also they can learn to edit and publish their work like read writers.

Other ideas for activities to try at home

- *Writing messages for people on post it notes*
- *Holiday lists*
- *Postcards*
- *Letters to friends, Santa!*
- *Diary / scrapbooks*
- *Writing captions for family photo albums*
- *Thank you letters*

