

A FEW IDEAS TO HELP YOUR CHILD WITH READING AND WRITING THIS YEAR

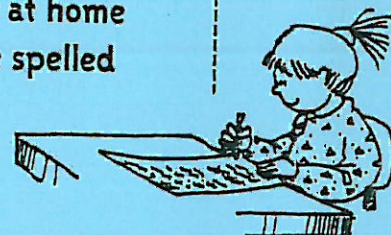
1. Read to your child (lots of poetry, stories). When you are reading, leave out obvious words and let your child fill them in.
2. Read with your child (both together!).
3. Listen to me read. Respond gently to my mistakes. If I make a meaningless error when I read, stop me and ask me if that makes sense. Lead me to see that when I read, it must make sense.
4. Illustrations are helpful to the beginning reader. Talk about the pictures with your child.
5. Ask questions about what we read.
 - (a) Does this story remind you of any other story you read?
 - (b) Why do (or why don't) you like the story?
 - (c) Is it a true story? Why or why not?
 - (d) What would you have done if you were the main character? Why?
6. Provide lots of opportunities for you and your child to talk.
7. Write the words of familiar songs on a sheet of paper or find the words on record covers. Let the child point to the words as he sings them.
8. Illustrate a story (four events in order).
9. Dramatize a story (maybe you could even help me write my own play).
10. Give your children the materials to make puppets for a story. Take time to enjoy the show!
11. Keep a diary together.
12. Go on short trips. Read and write about places you visit.
13. Read and do (crafts, recipes, etc.)
14. Keep a scrapbook of pictures or special activities. Help me to print a sentence or two about each event.
15. Write letters and postcards. Share a family letter.
16. Play charades.
17. Tape Recorder - Children love to hear themselves. Let them read or talk and, record it on the tape. When they listen to themselves, they can often tell how they could improve their reading or speaking without even being told.

18. Before taking a trip (even a very short one), let your child help with the plans. Write down those things which must be done, in the order in which they need to be done.
19. Make your child responsible for putting notices and messages on a family bulletin board.
20. Write notes to your child. Tuck notes into lunch boxes, on pillows or doors so he/she becomes curious about communication.
21. Encourage your child do make lists - shopping lists, birthday party lists, lists of their favorite ice cream, etc.

REMEMBER - ALL HOME READING AND WRITING ACTIVITIES SHOULD BE SHORT, SIMPLE, AND FUN!!!

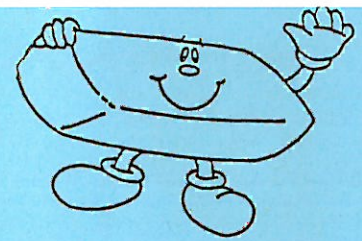
How Can You Help with Spelling at Home?

To spell correctly requires lots of thinking and lots and lots of practice! Here are some ideas you can try at home to help your child to learn about how words are spelled and how to become a better speller.



- ☐ **Encourage your child to write.** Every writing opportunity is an opportunity for your child to *think about how words are spelled!*
- ☐ **Encourage your child to read.** Every reading opportunity is an opportunity for your child to *see how words are spelled!*
- ☐ **Write to your child.** Create messages for fun, to share important family news, . . . Put your notes in your child's lunch box, under his or her pillow, on a family bulletin board, on the refrigerator, . . . If you are away from home, mail a letter or postcard to your child.
- ☐ **Write alongside your child.** While your child is writing, you can sit at the table and write your own lists, notes, letters, diary, . . . When it's appropriate, you can comment on words you have trouble remembering how to spell.
- ☐ **Together, play word games** such as "Scrabble," "Spill & Spell," "Lexicon," "Boggle," "Super Solver," and "Word Bound," or various computer games that involve word building.
- ☐ **Play "I Spy" with rhyming words,** such as, "I Spy a word that rhymes with night." (light)
- ☐ **Find all the objects in your home that begin with certain letters.** (This game can be extended to include lists of boys' names, girls' names, fruits, vegetables, and so on.)
- ☐ **Play alphabet games together** that involve organizing names or objects in alphabetical order. (Alphabet books and picture dictionaries can be helpful.)
- ☐ **Search through books, newspapers, and magazines with your child** to find words that he or she recognizes. Together, as you look at the words, spell them out loud, and then invite your child to try to spell them from memory! Your child could keep a personal dictionary of words that he or she knows how to spell. Celebrate your child's efforts by commenting on the letters in words that he or she puts in the correct order, and all the thinking that he or she does to try to spell a word!

WRITING DEVELOPMENT



PRE - EMERGENT

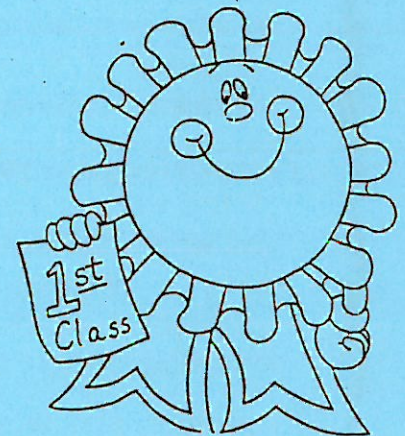
- attempts to write
- draws and writes symbols randomly on the page
- uses illustrations to express thoughts
- writes letters, symbols, numbers in a line across the page
- demonstrates some awareness of print conventions (e.g., spaces, periods, ...)
- copies words displayed around the room
- reads own writing but changes the message each time
- has difficulty reading own writing
- demonstrates some awareness of letter-sound relationships (e.g., prints one or two letters of a word)
- attempts to convey a message
- writes some words that are recognizable (e.g., child's name, *mom*, *dad*, *love*, ...)

EMERGENT

- writes familiar words
- reads own written message consistently (the same words each time)
- separates words with a space (word boundaries)
- begins to connect letters to their sounds (beginning, final, medial consonants)
- labels drawings
- lists ideas which may not be connected
- writes a message that is readable by others
- uses sentence patterns successfully
- uses invented spelling
- begins to use punctuation (periods, question marks, ...)

TRANSITIONAL

- writes several short sentences
- connects ideas (e.g., *and*, *then*)
- uses phonics to spell words
- spells some words from memory
- uses punctuation more consistently
- uses capital letters to begin sentences
- illustrates personal stories
- prints letters of consistent size and formation
- writes a familiar story with a beginning, middle and end
- writes using a pattern from a familiar story or poem
- uses more conventional spelling



Helpful Strategies for Parents to Use in Supporting their Children's Writing at Home

1. Encourage your child to take risks
It is important for your child to be comfortable as a writer.
2. Praise and encourage your child's attempts at writing and celebrate your child's efforts. Since some of the writing may be "author dependent", it is OK to include a translation.
3. Learning occurs best when it has a real purpose that children can see and understand. This makes it important for parents to encourage their children to write for "real" purposes. Keeping the developmental stages in mind, allow children to experiment with their own language and spelling rather than spelling words for them.
Some suggested "real" purposes:
 - make up invitations to parties
 - make homemade cards for special occasions
 - write thank-you notes for gifts and favors
 - leave notes for family members on a message board
 - write letters to grandparents, other relatives, pen-pals
 - make lists: shopping, things to do, things to take on a trip
 - keep a diary
 - leave messages and encourage your child to respond

4. As your child becomes more confident, encourage use of appropriate spelling strategies:

- put down what you think you hear as you say the word slowly
- use environmental print (on a cereal box, signs)
- listen for beginning and ending sounds
- listen for middle sounds
- listen for vowel sounds
- listen for small words in big words
- think of rhyming words and word families
- visualize the word in your mind
- use mnemonic devices to remember unusual words (ur in church, a friend to the end, people say Brr in February)

5. As your child's writing becomes more developed encourage self evaluation:

- proof read for spelling, check to see if words look right
- underline or circle words that may need revision
- identify problem words and look for a strategy (principal can be a pal)
- use resources for revising spelling (dictionary, spell checker)

We Are What We Watch: Television and 'Screen Time'

from a parent's perspective

by Roslyn Duffy

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— Situation —

A little girl and her father sat in their living room watching as a man swallowed fiery torches on the television screen. A visiting friend worried that the three-year-old girl should not see something so dangerous. The dad said, "She's not really paying attention."

As they spoke the scene changed to two robots — one bent into an arch while the other climbed onto his stomach. At once the little girl bent backward and called out to the visitor, "Okay, now you climb on me!"

Children are paying attention.

What problems do you experience?
Send a description, a short word "snapshot" of the situation. Each issue, we will address your real-life issues. To assure confidentiality, names of those submitting problems will not appear. Elements of several problems may be combined for this column. Only situations appearing in the column receive responses.

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— Solution —

Seeing is Believing

Children believe what they see because their brains are still developing. One adult friend remembers at about age three, hearing a woman on television say, "Hello. I am so glad to be with you today." My friend, believing this total stranger could see her, ran from the room terrified. Children do not differentiate *real* from *pretend* until they are five or older, nor do they interpret what they see, as adults might.

When two preschoolers were told to "*shake*" before beginning a game, meaning to shake hands, they both began to wiggle and *shake*. Young children interpret things literally. Remember when television studios stopped airing the image of planes crashing into the World Trade Tower on September 11? For young children, every repeat of that sequence represented the event taking place again.

For youngsters — *seeing is believing*.

Media Reality

The Kaiser Family Foundation released a report in October 2003 documenting that children six and under now engage in *screen time* (television, computers, and video games) an average of two hours daily. The *American Academy of Pediatrics* advises against children under two watching television, and yet 68 percent of children in this age group do so.

What we will do with this information is uncertain — but it is clear that *screen time* plays a potent role in children's lives today.

Seeing and Doing

Children imitate what they see. The good news is that parents reported that 78 percent of what was imitated from the media was positive, such as sharing or helping, but an alarming 36 percent was of aggressive behavior (Kaiser Report, item #8).

Our three year old would-be acrobat serves to remind us:

Children are paying attention — therefore so must we.

Media access is one area where adults wield important discretionary power.

Oral Traditions — Whose Values?

Culture and traditions are passed from generation to generation through music, dance, and stories. Oral story-telling, the passing down of stories from tribal elders, is a time-honored tradition. These stories contain the beliefs, values, and detail events that connect us to the past and weave generations together.

With the advent of the printing press, books and the written word largely supplanted oral story-telling traditions. The pen became *mightier than the sword* for shaping and changing attitudes.

Screen time has become today's story-telling medium, often nudging books aside. By documenting this significant societal shift, the Kaiser Report verified a cultural watershed. Has media become our link from the past, to the present, to the future?

So What?

As screen time has *increased*, the age of those watching has *decreased*. So what?

If screen time increases — what decreases?

Are there attention span implications? Because media events take place in several second or minute intervals, will children be trained to have shorter attention spans?

Does *screen time* replace exercise time? Will childhood obesity increase? What are the public health implications? What role will books continue to play? Will learning to read be affected? Will reading diminish in value? Questions outnumber answers.

A Reading Culture

The Kaiser Report found that four- to six-year-old children, in households with "heavy" television viewing, were "less

likely" to be able to read, though it did not say that the one caused the other. The critical information was the documented relationship involving *screen time*, lowered reading ability, and diminished time devoted to daily reading (Kaiser Report: Items #4 and 6).

For books to remain valued, people must be able to read. Reading means being read to; viewing books as valued resources; and devoting time to reading practice.

Not Right or Wrong But Aware

The Kaiser Report gave us important information, the implications of which society must evaluate.

Change brings challenges.

One stay-at-home mom commented that those most vocal against television and videos "aren't home with their kids all day." True. Entertaining and keeping track of young children is exhausting, and 45 percent of parents admitted to using videos and television to occupy their children (Kaiser Report, item #15).

Screen time is not a "right or wrong" issue — but it is an issue.

We live in a media world — and so do our children. What we want is for that three-year-old girl watching someone swallow fiery torches to be more influenced by the dad whose lap she watches from, than by what she watches from his lap.

Can it be done? How can *screen time* be tamed without resorting to a prohibition-like lifestyle? The answer is: *Pay attention.*

Choices Matter

Here are some steps to consider.

■ *Turn off the television when no one is watching.* Doing this allows adults to be aware of what their children are exposed to.

■ *Do not place a television or a computer in a young child's bedroom.* The same reason as above applies. This also makes it easier to enforce time and content limitations.

■ *Limit daily screen time.* According to the Kaiser Report, when parents enforce their media rules, children are more likely to read daily and to spend more time playing outdoors (Kaiser Report, item #9).

■ *Monitor programming for appropriateness.* What best represents the cultural inheritance you wish to pass on: the stories and values of *Lilo and Stitch* or those of *South Park*? Choices matter.

■ *View programs together.* When not choosing the programming, watching a program with a child gives an adult the opportunity to question, discuss, and help a child interpret what she sees.

■ *Choose non-commercial programs.* Most videos from the library, such as animated versions of children's books, do not promote consumerism. Are those profiting from a potential lunchbox purchase, collectible cartoon doll, or imprinted t-shirt likely to place your child's best interests at heart?

■ *Combine books and media use.* Books on tape bring media and the written word together, encouraging imagination.

■ *Read.* Raise a reader. Read to your children. Read with your children. Model reading. Make time for reading.

Our choices matter.

"No, we won't do that acrobatic trick, dear. Let's read a story, instead."