

Communication, Language and Literacy



This booklet has been compiled to help you and your child continue building the Literacy skills they have been working on at school.

The information covers games, activities and experiences that you can carry out at home
Within the booklet there are ideas for

- Speaking and Listening
- Learning Letter Sounds and Key Words
- Ideas For Extending Stories At Home
- Writing and Pre-Writing Skills

Your child learns best by practising for a short while, repeating the same games and activities a number of times. Modelling helps them to understand and is a powerful teaching tool.

Overall, remember to keep it short, simple and fun!

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Developing Speaking and Listening Skills

Children's spoken language supports reading and writing

Conversation

- Builds vocabulary and understanding.
- Helps us to form opinions and make choices.
- Enables better expression of feelings.
- Teaches children to take turns.
- Encourages discussions about consequences.

Make time to listen to your child talking. Listening carefully helps build up attention span. Show that you are interested in what they are talking about – look at your child, smile, nod your head, ask a question or make a response to show that you have been listening.

These are a few activities you can use to help support your children at home:

- ◆ Action songs, nursery rhymes and number rhymes.
- ◆ Home corner and role play activities.
- ◆ 'Small world' toys.
- ◆ The Puppet theatre – using finger and hand-puppets.
- ◆ Interacting with children's imaginative play.
- ◆ Playing games e.g. snap.
- ◆ Making displays related to topics of interest.
- ◆ Planning activities e.g. cooking.
- ◆ Sharing experiences that children can reflect on e.g. visits.
- ◆ Reviewing activities related to art and design or scientific investigation e.g. sand/ water play.
- ◆ News times – reflecting on and recounting past events, sharing thoughts and ideas.
- ◆ Sharing books – fiction and non-fiction.
 - Telling and reading favourite stories.
 - Re-telling familiar stories.
 - Predicting the end of unfamiliar stories.

Learning Letter Sounds and Key Words

Use the pictures of the actions which match each letter sound that you received in your pack at the Parent Briefing evening. They are taught in these sequential sets to encourage word building alongside letter recognition.

What does learning a letter comprise?

- Distinguishing the shape of the letter from other letter shapes.
- Recognising and articulating a sound associated with the letter shape.
- Recalling the shape of the letter when given its sound.
- Writing the shape of the letter with the correct movement, orientation and relationship to other letters.
- Naming the letter.
- Being able to recall and recognise the shape of a letter from its name.

Articulate each sound (phoneme) as clearly as possible. It is a common mistake that the phonemes are often followed by an 'uh' sound making words hard to blend. eg. c-a-t can often be heard as cuh-a-tuh.

Activities

- ◆ Sounds talk – break down simple words when you are asking questions or giving instructions, eg. Can you put on your h-a-t hat?
- ◆ Alliteration fun eg. With their name ‘Jolly Jessie jumped’, ‘Daddy does the dishes’. In the supermarket – ‘One tall tin of tomatoes’. Play around with familiar songs eg. Old Macdonald had some sheep, shoes, shorts, with a sh sh here and a sh sh there.
- ◆ Collect items that start with the same sound.
- ◆ I spy ...
- ◆ Snap – this is played in the usual way but when Snap is called the child must read either the letter sound or word correctly in order to win the opponent’s cards.
- ◆ Pelmanism – a selection of paired letter / word cards are placed face down. Each player takes turns to pick up two cards. If the cards match the child can keep them. The player with the most cards is the winner.
- ◆ Letter / picture dominoes / jigsaws.
- ◆ Letter / picture match – match picture cards to appropriate letter. You can match – initial sounds (c-cat), medial sounds (e-peg) or final sounds (g-pig). Final and medial sounds are more difficult.
- ◆ Letter / word bingo – every player has a card with a different letter / word on it. Letters / words are drawn from a pot in random order. Players cross out their sounds / words as they are pulled out. The winner is the first person to have all their sounds / words crossed out.
- ◆ Hide and seek – you hide letter / word cards around the room and your child tries to find the cards and match them to the card they are holding.
- ◆ Fishing – put paper clips in a selection of letter / word cards and use a magnet fishing rod to ‘catch’ and then say the letter sound / word.
- ◆ Use magnetic letters to match to letter / word cards or to make words.
- ◆ Have a letter / word of the day and look for it everywhere.
- ◆ Paint a letter / word of the day or write it with felt pens.
- ◆ Sort the word cards according to the number of letters.
- ◆ Sort the words into two sets – those which can be worked out by letter sounds (get) and those which are tricky and can’t (they).
- ◆ As your child becomes more familiar with the words get them to read each word, turn it over and try to write.
- ◆ Think of a sentence that includes a selection of key words. Write the sentence and concentrate on spelling the key words.
- Try playing snap, pairs, lotto, bingo, pelmanism with word cards.
- Make up silly sentences using word cards, can you change them to make sense?

The first 100 high frequency words

Words that can be decoded by sounding out

a

an

as

if

at

in

it

is

off

of

can

on

but

dad

back

had

get

big

has

and

not

him

up

his

will

got

that

mum

then

see

with

this

for

them

down

now

too

look

children

went

from

it's

help

just

day

don't

made

old

came

I'm

make

by

here

about

saw

your

very

house

put

'Tricky' high frequency words

the

to

I

no

go

into

he

we

she

be

me

you

was

all

they

my

are

said

her

have

were

like

there

so

little

do

one

some

when

out

come

oh

what

their

looked

people

called

could

asked

Mrs

Mr

Reading at Home

Have a regular story time, but add other special story times eg. when a friend visits.
Use your local library. Encourage your child to take care of books.

As well as all of these skills children also need to have a good attitude about books and the ENJOYMENT that they can bring. We need to encourage children to enjoy reading

Involve your child in selecting their book.

Read the title of the book and the name of the author.

Predict what it may be about, what characters might appear and where it could be set.

Follow the word with your finger or let your child do this.

Ask questions as the story develops.

Encourage predictions about what might happen next.

Sequence the events in the story.

Model reading from left to right and top to bottom.

Find letters and words and identify how they are different to pictures.

Re-tell the story using story language.

Ideas for extending stories at home

- Talk about the characters – what are they doing, what will happen next, are they happy or sad, have you ever done what they are doing?
- Make a story sack for your story. Eg. Goldilocks' story sack could include a girl, 3 bears, plastic bowl and spoon, blanket, oats box, scenery / props made together from cardboard boxes for beds...
- Make up a story about what happened next, illustrate it while an adult scribes.
- Use the familiar words in the story to play matching games, can you find those words in other books?
- Try picking out an individual letter sound in a book – how many times can you find it? How many words can you find beginning with that sound?
- Use the theme of the book for a picture or piece of emergent writing e.g. an invitation, a letter, a recipe, a postcard, a shopping list.
- Make the book come alive, use the theme of the book for cooking, model making, painting etc. e.g. The Gingerbread Man – make gingerbread biscuits, Goldilocks – make porridge, Red Riding Hood – pack a basket with things for Grandma.
- Act out the story using toys and dolls, put on a show, make tickets and a programme.

Developing Writing Skills

Children in the Foundation Stage will be at many different stages of development. Some children may be at the mark making stage, others may be writing strings of letters and some are beginning to use their knowledge of letter sounds. At all stages children need to feel that what they are writing is valuable and should be encouraged to be as independent as possible. An over-dependence on copying or asking for every spelling can cause children to become unwilling to 'have a go' on their own in case they make mistake. Lots of experimentation in play situations will lead to more confident writing later.

If children can make large windmills with their arms outstretched (both forwards and backward) this is a good indicator that their gross motor skills are developed enough to begin writing.

If children can touch their thumb to each of their fingers in turn, this is a good indicator that their fine motor skills are developed enough to begin to write.

Mark making is the first step towards writing and is closely linked to physical development. The more opportunities your child has to develop large and small movement in their arms, hands and fingers the easier it will be to make marks with a variety of tools.

- Climbing, swinging, digging, sweeping and other gross motor control activities.
- Paints, paintbrushes, sticks, fingers or any objects that can be used to make marks.

Small or fine motor development will be needed to hold pencils and pens correctly.

- Using scissors to cut.
- Drawing with a variety of materials.
- Colouring in.
- Jigsaw puzzles.
- Threading beads and lacing boards.
- Handling /Using pegs and washing baskets, rice and tweezers or pasta and spoons.
- Pouring sand or water.

In the early stages of learning to write your child will like to experiment for themselves with a variety of tools. They will often draw pictures with their writing. When modelling writing, it is a good idea to use lower case letters, introducing capitals only for their names.

- Tracing letters in sand or slime.
- Find and identify letter shapes buried in the sand or in a feely bag.
- Paint big letter shapes.
- Use art programs on the computer to draw letters.
- Trace over sandpaper letters with fingers.
- Rolling letters with moulded letter shapes and a marble.
- Handwriting sheets (these are used only as an extra tool and never exclusively).

- Use tracing paper to trace shapes or letters.
- Use picture templates and stencils to draw around.
- Make letter shapes from playdough.

It is helpful to make the activities multi-sensory at this stage of development.

Activities for Developing Writing Skills

The following is a list of some ideas you could try at home.

- ◆ Write restaurant orders in a role-play situation.
- ◆ Write diary entries in an old diary.
- ◆ Write greetings in letters or cards.
- ◆ Act as scribe while your child retells part of a familiar story. Ask them to give initial letter sounds of some of the words and find them on an alphabet card. Demonstrate how to space words and where to put punctuation.
- ◆ Write captions to accompany photographs or children's pictures.
- ◆ Make a model with a construction kit and write a label to accompany it. Talk about what they have written.
- ◆ Write a letter from one story character to another e.g. write a letter of apology from the spider to Little Miss Muffet.
- ◆ Write a sentence about a particular trip or event.
- ◆ Write a shopping list for the 3 bears so that they can make porridge.
- ◆ Write a set of instructions informing others how to plant a seed.
- ◆ Write a speech bubble. What did the giant say to Jack?

As your child becomes more able to write the sounds they hear when writing, encourage them to say the sentence before writing. Then ask questions such as:

What is the first word that you will write?

What letter does it begin with?

Can you hear any other sounds in the word? How do you write those?

Can you hear the sound at the end of the word?

What is the next word?

What do we put at the end of a sentence?

When writing independently, use a word list to find high frequency words such as 'and', 'the', 'to', 'at' etc. Children at this stage may be able to read these words but not remember how to spell them.

Keep all activities short and sweet. Praise and encourage!

Some useful websites

www.bookstart.co.uk information about the national Bookstart scheme.

www.read-count.org/index.asp a website you and your child can explore together with ideas for reading and online games.

www.talktoyourbaby.org.uk

www.ican.org.uk lots of information on the importance of speaking and listening skills.

www.nationalliteracytrust.org.uk/familyreading/parents how to make reading and writing fun for you and your family.

www.booktrusted.co.uk

www.bbc.co.uk/cbeebies/grownups

www.earlywords.net