

How can I help my child with writing at home?

Writing/Reading in Year 1

Writing covers a huge range of skills, and it can take time for children to become confident, independent writers.

There are so many different types of writing—fantasy stories, persuasive leaflets, historical reports—and each one asks something different from a child. This is a long way from those early stages of simply making marks on paper!

Children also have to learn the practical side of writing, like how to hold a pencil comfortably and form letters. On top of that comes grammar, sentence structure, and learning how to choose language that creates an effect. When you think about it, writing asks children to juggle lots of skills at once—skills that adults often use without even thinking.

So the big question is: **how can we support writing at home in a simple, helpful way?**

Over time through regular exposure to words through reading and seeing them around them, they will begin to build an understanding of how words should look—and may realise ‘hws’ for ‘house’ doesn’t look right, even though they don’t understand all the rules.

To begin with it is important that writing is kept purposeful and meaningful to your child rather than grammatically correct.

Try some of the following activities to develop enthusiasm, skills and enjoyment of writing:

- Invite your child to keep a journal (pictures, labels etc.)
- Play post office at home—decorate an old box into a letter box and write notes to each other!
- Have a writing area, a box full of paper, pencils, crayons, chalk boards etc.
- You could role play and write shopping lists! Model writing by writing a simple message to your child each day. They may soon want to respond back...

Most of all make sure your child has fun in their learning!

Writing

Try some real-world writing

Encouraging your child to write for real purposes can make writing feel more meaningful. Simple tasks like writing birthday cards, shopping lists, or letters to family members show children how useful writing can be.

For younger children, short but regular writing moments work best. You might ask them to jot down their favourite part of the day each evening before bed. Over time, keeping a little diary like this can help them see real progress in their writing—plus it becomes a lovely keepsake for you both.

Tell stories aloud

Talking through stories is a fun way to help your child practise organising their ideas and using adventurous language. If they're not sure where to begin, ask them to retell a story they already know, such as *Little Red Riding Hood* or *The Three Little Pigs*.

As your child becomes more confident telling stories out loud, you can gently encourage them to turn these spoken stories into simple written ones. Starting with a few sentences or drawing pictures with captions can help them feel successful and ready for more writing over time.

Phonics/Reading

As children try to figure out the relationship between letters and sounds (which in the English language don't correspond!) in their writing they will invent their own way of spelling and often using the letter name strategy. Therefore, they will write as they hear, such as elephant as 'l-f-n-t'. They will often miss out vowels or hard to sound out consonants. Encourage your child to sound out the word slowly. This will help with segment a word into sounds. Hearing separate sounds in words and connecting them to letters is a vital beginning stage in your child's ability to use phonics to decipher words.

Read to your child

At this age, children can usually only read simple books on their own. By reading them stories that are a little more challenging, you help build their vocabulary and deepen their understanding of language.

Try to keep story time fun and engaging. Using different voices, asking questions as you go, and pointing out interesting pictures can make a huge difference to how much your child enjoys reading with you.

Have your child read to you

Listening to your child read isn't just good for building their reading confidence. Seeing words in print also helps them understand vocabulary, notice spelling patterns, and see how grammar and punctuation work. As you read together, you can occasionally talk about the author's choices. For example:

"I wonder why the author described the castle as 'gloomy'? What might that tell us about what could happen next?"

Spelling

Helping your child learn to read and write the Year 1 common exception words and tricky words can really boost their confidence. These are words that don't always follow the usual spelling rules, so children need extra practice to recognise and remember them. You can support your child by spotting these words together in books, labelling objects around the home, or making simple flashcards to practise a few at a time. Writing them in fun ways—such as with colourful pens, in sand, or on a whiteboard—can also help the spellings stick. Little and often works best, and celebrating small successes will help keep your child motivated as they learn these tricky but important words.

https://cdn.oxfordowl.co.uk/2019/08/29/13/48/38/98b01b1e-5cd2-47f6-a592-f97cebd0b777/CommonExceptionWords_Y1.pdf (Common Exception Words)

Phase 2 to 5 Tricky Words			
Phase 2	Phase 3	Phase 4	Phase 5
I	he	said	oh
no	she	have	Mrs
the	we	like	people
to	me	so	their
go	be	do	called
into	you	some	Mr
	are	come	looked
	her	little	asked
	was	one	could
	all	were	
	they	there	
	my	what	
		when	
		out	

What does it mean for a Year 1 child to be writing at the expected standard?

By the end of Year 1, children are expected to consistently show certain writing skills in their work. With guidance from their teacher, a child writing at the expected standard can:

- Read their own writing out loud clearly and talk about it.
- Say sentences out loud first and put them in order to tell a short story.
- Join words and short sentences using the word “and.”
- Use past, present, and future tense correctly in speaking and start using them in writing.
- Begin many sentences with a capital letter and end them with a full stop, question mark, or exclamation mark.
- Spell some Year 1 common exception words and the days of the week.
- Break spoken words into sounds (phonemes) and write them down in a way that makes sense, even if spelling isn't perfect.
- Form most letters and numbers correctly, showing the difference between uppercase and lowercase letters.
- Leave spaces between words

What does Year 1 writing look like?

A child who meets the expected standard can consistently use these skills independently in their writing. Their work shows that they understand sentence structure, spelling, punctuation, and can organise ideas clearly. Looking at a piece of their writing gives a snapshot of how these standards are being met.