

Helping your child with early writing

1. Pencil grip: The grip used by young children will usually improve as their hand movements become more controlled and we use triangular pencils to encourage 3 fingers on the pencil.
2. Using their phoneme mat - We want the children to **write phonetically, independently and remember their tricky words**. Your child will get a phoneme mat sent home with them.
By the end of Reception, children should be able to write a few sentences using their phonics and be able to read it back.
3. Independence - encourage their independence in writing. You can talk about what sentence your child is going to write as sometimes they might not remember the whole sentence. If they are finding a word tricky, encourage them to use their fingers to sound it out (and you can model this too). Remember it is what they hear, not how the real word is written (e.g: phonetically the child would write spighder, instead of spider as the children learn in Reception the igh sound in words).
4. Finger spaces -You can remind the children to remember their finger spaces between their words. They could make their own finger spacer using a bit of card or a lolly stick and decorate it.
5. Try not to keep 'correcting' children about what they write at this time, as this can stop them from wanting to have a go at writing new words.
6. Capital letters - should only be at the beginning of sentences (not line) and you can talk to your child about they should be used for names and places and never in the middle of words!
7. Back to front letters: Children have to rely on their memory to write letters until they become good readers. This means that nearly all children will reverse their letters early on, or miss letters out of words. We look at flash cards (but your child could write them down on bits of paper) and we say rhymes to remember the shape of the letter. We also do cursive letters at school - we call them whooshes 'we always whoosh to the start on the line'.
8. Left-handed children: Children are born being either right-handed or left-handed and this normally shows by about three years. Left-handed children sometimes find it easier if they are writing on a slope and benefit from having opportunities to do large scale mark-making.
9. Spelling usually becomes more accurate as children learn to read. It is worth taking a relaxed approach because, if children become anxious about how to write down a word, they may develop a habit of only writing what they know they can spell. Please do not encourage the children to 'copy write' as this will lead to independence on an adult. It can lead the children to write less and, in the end, they become less imaginative writers. Even so, once children begin to read it is worth pointing out words that 'play tricks' on us in the way they are spelt - words like 'phantom', 'knight' or 'would'. Doing this, can help.
10. Mark-making must be fun for children **(please do not worry if your child shows no interest)**
 - Special pens and paper, chalks or taking out a bucket of water and a paintbrush for children to enjoy playing with them and children love whiteboards as they are not permanent.
 - Try hard not to pass comments about how young children's writing looks, as this can put some children off and praise lots.
 - It helps if the writing has a purpose such as writing things on their shopping list, birthday invitations, letters to family or friends etc.
 - And remember that children need to see the adults around them writing.