

EA Literacy Service

Ideas to support a pupil with a writing difficulty at home



This document has been developed by the EA Literacy Service (Northern Ireland). It is intended for parents/carers who may be supporting a child or young person with literacy difficulties at home. Parents/carers may find some of these ideas useful. This is not a specific programme to be followed verbatim nor is it a prescriptive list of what should be done. It is a range of good practice ideas and activities you may decide to use based on the needs of the child. We hope you and your child find at least some of the content helpful and enjoyable.

*The EA Literacy Service Team
April 2020*

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Some ideas for parents to support writing:

Handwriting:

- ❖ Make sure they are holding the pencil properly, ensure correct tripod pencil grip, i.e. holding the sharp end of the pencil or pen between the thumb and first finger and resting on the middle finger.



- ❖ To build up strength and dexterity, pegboards / lacing / beading / sewing / Lego/ kneading dough, rolling plasticine snakes all help to build up dexterity in the fingers.
- ❖ Puzzle books with finish the drawing, dot to dots ('abc' as well as number), mazes, colouring in, drawing and painting help to improve hand / eye co-ordination skills.
- ❖ Offer a selection of pens and pencils to write with.
- ❖ Avoid fancy pencil tops - they interfere with pencil balance.
- ❖ Pencil grips can make it easier for small fingers to grip the pencil.
- ❖ Put a dot at the side of the page where you want them to start writing.
- ❖ Work on pastel paper to cut out the glare.
- ❖ You may want to provide a writing mat for hard surfaces



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Presentation:

- ❖ A sentence should begin with a capital letter and end with a full stop or other appropriate punctuation.
- ❖ If there is a margin, look at where your child starts writing from the margin.
- ❖ Try to write on the line if age appropriate or appropriate to your child's needs.
- ❖ There should be a space between every word. Finger spacing could be used. To encourage regular spacing say - 'give the words space to breathe.'
- ❖ Use COPS for proof reading for mistakes (see pg. 8).

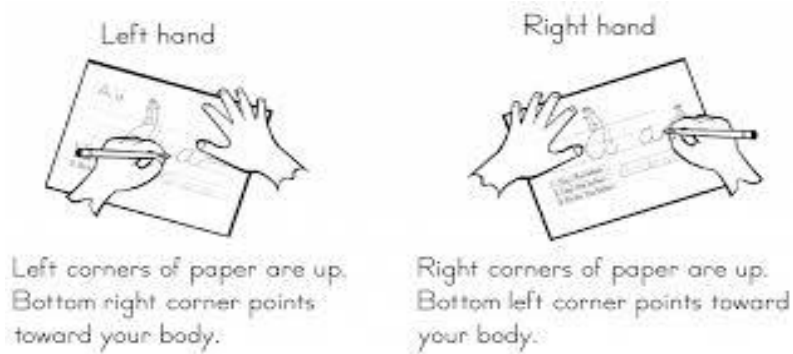
Practise letter formation:

- ❖ All letters except 'd' and 'e' start at the top (script).
- ❖ Oval letters should be closed tight.
- ❖ These small letters sit on the line (a c e m n o r s u v w x z) .
- ❖ Some letters hang down (g j p q y).
- ❖ Some letters are tall (b d f h k l).
- ❖ The body of all letters should be sitting on the line.
- ❖ The space between letters should be even.

Position and posture - make sure your child:

- ❖ Is provided with a chair and a table at the correct height (a cushion could be used on a chair).
- ❖ Has enough light.

- ❖ Keeps the book or paper in the correct position – tilted/slanted to the left for right-handed pupils and to the right for left-handed pupils.



- ❖ Uses the non-writing hand to steady the page.
- ❖ Holds the sharpened pencil or pen between the thumb and first finger, resting on the middle finger (tripod grip).
- ❖ Does not hold the pencil/pen too firmly or press too hard.
- ❖ If the child's writing is faint, use a 'B' pencil lead. If the writing is dark change to an 'F' or 'H' lead. There is also a wide variety of mechanical pencils available on the market with comfortable grips and wider barrels. For example:

www.thedyslexiashop.co.uk

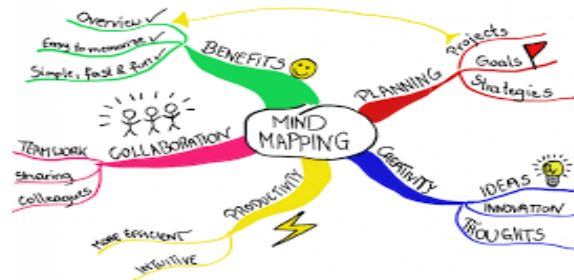
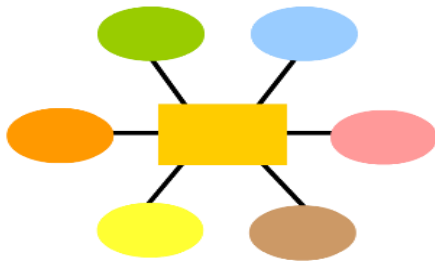


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Planning for writing:

When writing a sentence or a story for example, your child may have difficulty planning what to write and what order to write it in. Mind maps are a very useful tool to help children organise their ideas and get them down on paper.



- ❖ Help children to organise their thoughts, sequence ideas and clarify their thinking.
- ❖ Encourage active learning and improve concentration.
- ❖ Aid memory retention and recall.
- ❖ Provide a ready reference and a revision aid.
- ❖ Provide a means of ensuring the essay is in a logical sequence and all necessary content is included.
- ❖ Encourage independence, organisation and creativity.
- ❖ Assignments can be completed by hand or via word processing – assistive technology.

Do not expect your child to complete a piece of successful writing first go. Allow your child opportunities to do a rough draft of their written/word processed work, which they can then proof read for mistakes and rewrite.

Planning for writing continued:

P.O.W.E.R

- ✓ Plan
- ✓ Organise
- ✓ Write
- ✓ Edit
- ✓ Redraft



Remind your child to plan each sentence before they write it.



b/d confusion:

- ❖ 'Hubba Bubba' write h then turn it into b with a stroke across the bottom
- ❖ Thumbs up to 'b' right. Left hand for right handed writers - it makes the letter b
- ❖ Thumbs up to 'd' ecide. Right hand for left handed writers - it makes the letter d
- ❖ For the visual learner – b e d



When to Make a New Paragraph.

Think of TIP TOPP
A change in:

Time: 

Idea: 

Person:  

Theme: 

Or

Place: 

Picture: 

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For some children a 'try page' may be helpful to 'have a go' at spelling words:

Stretch out the word. What sounds do you hear?

- ❖ Does it sound like a word you know? e.g. look - cook
- ❖ Leave out the hard bit- then fill in the details later e.g.: bec-s (because)
- ❖ Use syllables -try to spell each little bit e.g. fan / tas / tic
- ❖ Try the word out - pick the one that looks right e.g. sno / snoe / snow
- ❖ Use assistive technology, e.g. speech-to-text or text-to-speech software if available to you.

Encourage proof reading for mistakes:

Watch out for **COPS**!



Please check for

Capitals
Words Left **O**ut
Punctuation
Spellings



Punctuation by ear!

Does it sound right?



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