

TIPS FOR PARENTS AND CARERS

GENERAL POINTERS

- Use lots of praise
- Build on what your children are confident doing
- As a useful rule of thumb, children can sit and concentrate at one sitting for their age + 10 minutes. So, a five year old might manage 15 minutes; a ten year old about 20 minutes. This is not an exact science!
- Encourage questions
- Mistakes are good. The best learners are not afraid to make a mistake
- If you're having a horrid time, stop doing it!

READING

- When phonetically decoding words remember to use 'pure sounds' without sounding 'ah' at the end of the sounds.
- For beginning readers, encourage the use of pictures to help children predict meaning.
- Don't ever let reading be a chore. If your child is struggling to decode a word, just read it for them. If it's a long word, you can model how you broke it down.
- Don't dwell on decoding words.
- Read for meaning and enjoyment.
- Continue to read aloud with confident, older readers.
- Try to ensure content of texts is matched to the age of the child and does not contain inappropriate storylines or concepts.
- Model good reading habits at home – ask yourself how often do your children see you reading? What do they see you reading? How does this compare with what and how often you expect them to read?
- Talk to your child about their reading and your own reading.
- Be an actor – read stories with loads of expression, different voices for different characters and encourage your kids to do the same.
- If you speak other languages at home encourage your children to use your language as well as English. You can often find dual language books in the local library.
- Visit your local library regularly; they often have storytelling sessions.

WRITING

- Your first response to what your child writes should be positive and encouraging.
- Try to respond first to the content and ideas in the writing rather than the surface features (eg. spellings, punctuation)
- Try to identify something in their writing you particularly like and appreciate (eg. A descriptive phrase, a way of looking at something, the presentation of the writing, its layout, maybe just the fact they've written something at all.)
- When addressing spellings, avoid bombarding your child. Better to focus on just one or two spellings by exploring families of words and rhyming words.
- Use the 'look, cover, write, check method'. This means your child looks at the word; covers it up with their hand; has a go at writing it; then checks to see if they've got it right.
- For children who find writing difficult, use whatever technology you have available to give confidence and experience success. For example, a reluctant writer might confidently narrate a story onto the recording facility of a mobile phone. The parent can support the child by transcribing this story.

- Encourage writing opportunities at home such as shopping lists, notes to family members, filling in the family calendar and keeping a diary.
- Using technology available to you, encourage and motivate children to write in different formats. For example, friends might want to create online shared documents such as a script for a short film that they can make at a later date or a cartoon strip using easily available software to import photographs. Or they might want to write a comic strip storyline using speech bubbles.

SPEAKING AND LISTENING

- Talk is vital to developing children's thinking. Talk to your children as much as you can and listen even more.
- Ask open questions such as 'tell me about your day', 'explain to me something you learned today' or 'what happened today that made you think 'wow, I didn't know that!'
- Play word games such as *Eye spy*, *Consequences* and *I went shopping and I bought...*
- Be aware, and make your children aware, of the part played by turn-taking in conversation and dialogue.
- Encourage children to ask questions
- Talk to your children about different types of voices that might be used in different situations. For older children, this might extend to the use of varieties of standard and non-standard English whilst younger ones might want to think about 'BIG' and 'small' voices; one better suited to the playground, the other to assembly. Play around with these different types of voices and language variations with children.
- Talk with your children about why you think you talk like you do – your accent, your dialect, your language variety. How is their language different and similar to yours?

MATHS

- Encourage counting and arithmetic in all daily activities, such as cooking (weighing ingredients), shopping (estimating the bill) and travel (calculating distances).
- Use games on websites such as [BBC Bitesize](#) and [Khan Academy](#) to support your children's learning of particular concepts.
- Set an example by using maths in your daily routine. Point out to your children where maths concepts apply in daily life: receiving change in a shop; calculating how many hours and/or minutes to leave in order to reach a destination at a specific time; working out if you've got enough money to buy all the sweets that you want *and* the comic!
- Play mental arithmetic games and quizzes, making sure to allow for success.
- Play board games where you can count on and back.
- Learn from your child. At some point in a child's education, h/she may overtake you in what they can do. Give them opportunities to teach you what they know and master new concepts together.
- Use packs of playing cards for different games. Remove court cards (King, Jack, Queen) and use the rest to create different number games using the different digits.