Things to know about writing in Foxes and Badgers



Writing is more than putting words on paper. Your child needs to think about what to write; say what they want to write, write it down and re-read their writing. It is a balancing act between having wonderful ideas (creativity), organising their ideas and the ability to put these exciting ideas onto paper (handwriting and spelling).





One of the first means of communication for your child is through drawing. Do encourage your child to draw and to discuss his/her drawings. Ask questions: What is the boy doing? Does the house look like ours? Can you tell a story about this picture?

Helpful pointers for writing at home!

Writing is just not easy – and some children find it a chore rather than fun. Some children will happily write for pure pleasure, and others encouraged to do even three lines of writing! So how can you make writing seem just a bit more attractive?

Follow your child's interests: Does your child like football, cooking or making things, designing clothes or playing with Lego? Whatever their interest, there will be good writing opportunities around it. Perhaps a football diary, instructions or recipes. Use postcards or fancy writing paper, write in coloured pens and pencils. You could encourage them to write to family members. Provide post it stickers and encourage them to write messages to everyone, even the cat!

Remember TALK comes first!

The standard of children's writing at school is not only how they form letters and handwrite. They must also be able to express their ideas clearly. Can they put thoughts in order and discuss what they want to say? All of these depend on speaking. So talk to your child, encourage them to express themselves, listen and respond to their ideas.

It all helps!



GOLDEN RULES

In helping your child to learn to write well at home, remember that your goal is to make writing easier and more enjoyable.

- **DO** offer plenty of praise. Writing takes practice and perseverance, both of which are hard if you are feeling discouraged. Take a positive approach and say something good about your child's writing. Is it for a purpose? Does it make sense? Have they used some exciting words? Is it interesting? Try saying ~ 'I love the way you've put that! It's brilliant.' Not 'I wish you would leave a space between your words.'

- Provide a place: It is important for a child to have a place to write - a desk or table or a smooth, flat surface.

- Have the materials: Provide plenty of paper - lined and unlined - and things to write with, including pencils, pens, and crayons.

- **DO** allow different forms of writing. Writing emails or typing messages are all perfectly good ways for children to express themselves in written form.

- Allow time: Help your child spend time thinking about a writing project or exercise. Good writers do a great deal of thinking!

- Respond: Do respond to the ideas your child talks about or presents in writing. This means focusing on "what" the child has written (their ideas), not "how" it was written (spelling and handwriting). It's usually wise to ignore spelling mistakes, particularly at the stage when your child is just learning to write their ideas down. In school, we do not correct every spelling mistake as this is not the main focus of the writing task. The main criteria for a healthy piece of writing is that:
    - ◊ We can read it
    - ◊ It is well expressed
    - ◊ It fulfils its purpose – i.e., if it is a thank-you letter to granny; it says thank you!
    - ◊ If the writing satisfies all these criteria, then a few mis-spelt words do not really matter.

- Write together: Encourage your child to help you with your writing. It is important that your child sees that writing is important to adults. They could help you write a shopping list, a birthday card, notes or messages, a to-do list.



Some Fun Writing Ideas

Magic writing boards are great fun for children. These can be bought cheaply and used even on car journeys.

White boards encourage the children to write and practise mark making.

Write with your child – 'think aloud' so they can hear the decisions you make as you write. Children will want to write if they see a purpose to the writing.

Talk about the words they see in everyday life- food packaging, signs in the supermarkets, messages on birthday cards and invitations.

Write a shopping list together- model and allow them to take their own list to the shop to give the writing a purpose.

Send an email- Your child says the message and you type it initially. Children can develop computer skills at the same time. Try writing an invitation to a story character.

Provide your child with a 'writing box'- put a range of writing items in the box – pens, pencils, rainbow pencils, old birthday cards, coloured paper, sticky tape to make little books. Rolls of wallpaper can be fixed to a table or a fence for large writing and drawing.

Praise them for their play writing- those early squiggles and marks show that your child is beginning to understand writing.

Set an example- make sure your child sees you writing!

Strengthen their writing hand-Try fun activities which strengthen your child's hand. For example: cutting, painting, squeezing playdough, picking up small things with tweezers and pegs.

Messages- leave messages with magnetic letters on the fridge for them to reply to.

Make up stories together- use their toys as characters and write the story with them so they say it. Make up a little booklet. Take photographs and use the pictures in the book.

Notices and signs- about important things in their play e.g. The Cave – Keep Out! Shoe Shop – Open, Don't walk on the seeds we have planted!

Captions- to add to photos that they or an adult has taken.

Useful resources to promote writing at home:

- sticky labels, e.g. for their letters, parcels, for labelling things they have made, labelling things for the role-play area
- paper in different shapes, sizes and colours for any of their needs
- an easel
- a whiteboard
- glittery / scented pens
- different sized writing implements – thick felt tips, paint brushes, fine pencils, sticks, wands, etc.
- clipboards and pens for drawing and writing
- a bag of puppets, monsters and other soft toys
- an easily erected tent or a sheet for an office, cave or den to make a perfect writing area
- envelopes
- sticky tape or glue
- coloured pencils and pens
- scissors
- glitter





FAQs…….

Should I let my child copy it down?

In an ideal world we would suggest not to let children copy sentences into their books. We say this because we believe that children need to talk, think and practise their skills. At this stage children's ideas are often more adventurous than their writing skills but this completely normal and encourage them to write down the sounds they can hear. It may look nothing like the word but this is fine.

Should I tell my child how to spell the word?

The most important aspect in early writing is putting the sounds in order. They may hear the first, middle and end sounds. Encourage these to be put in order and near each other. E.g. frmyrd (farmyard) or vIyulin (violin). In school we always say "Write what you can hear" As your childs writing develops they will become more accurate in recording all the sounds. Remember they only know a few of the many sounds in the English language. Did you know there are over 200 spelling combinations for 44 unique sounds – even we don't know some of them! It is ok to make mistakes and concentrate on the skill of segmenting – say the word, chop up the word into sounds, write the sounds down in the order they can be heard. This takes lots and lots of practise!

How much should my child be writing?

This is dependent on the stage your child is at on their writing journey.

A very early writer will need their marks on paper valued. At this stage the marks may appear to look like scribbles, circles or lines or even some letters from their name. Ask your child to interpret their marks and say "This is what it looks like when I write it."

For some the beginning sound will be all that they can hear. Share the writing with your child by completing the word for them. Together you can write multiple words or a simple sentence.

For others they may need a simple sentence starter such as 'He is…, There are…., It has…. I can….' With their own idea finishing the sentence. They might write 3 sentences in this format.

Some children will be attempting to write simple short sentences and with this in mind try making a sentence longer using words such as ***and*** or **but** (connectives) or adding a describing word (adjective) to make the sentence more interesting.

We hope that you have found this booklet useful. As always please do not hesitate to contact us if you would like further guidance.