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Kindergarten
to Year 2

Writing and spelling: The world of words



Department of
Education

Activities and fun ideas that help your children develop writing and spelling skills at home. A guide for parent/carers with children in Kindergarten to Year 2.



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From the Minister

We know the first years of school are really important times for children's development.

Writing and spelling are two essential skills children learn in their early years. This booklet provides you with ways to build your children's development and confidence in these areas.

You can use the ideas in the booklet in your everyday life at home and when you are out and about. There are also fun activities that can be part of family play time.

Most importantly, the booklet is designed to make early childhood writing and spelling enjoyable for you and your children, and the activities easy to include in your family's busy life.

I hope you find this booklet a helpful tool in developing your children's writing and spelling skills.

Hon Peter Collier MLC
Minister For Education



Learning about words

Children learn about words in many different ways.

When they are very young, it's often through experiences they share with you like reading books and birthday cards, watching people write, and seeing words in and around the home and when out and about.

Over time, children learn to recognise words, talk about letters and sounds, and connect them to their meaning. They learn to spell by working out the patterns in the English language and applying them to new words.

Did you know?

The 26 letters in the English alphabet stand for 44 different sounds. For example the letter *A* makes a different sound in *apple*, *apron*, *any* and *craft*.



Writing and spelling is important!

Learning to write and spell are essential skills for your children to develop, giving them a great start to school.

There are many ways you can help your children gain confidence and develop their skills with letters, words and spelling.

For example when you are making dinner, ask questions like: *Find something in the kitchen which starts with the same sound as your name.*

Quick ideas

Turn off the television. It's easier for your children to concentrate if there are no distractions.

It is important to remember that children progress at different rates. The activities and ideas in this booklet are a guide to help you teach your children at home.



In Kindergarten...

Children begin to experiment with forming letters and learn that printed words carry a message.

Have fun playing games with letters and words. Just a minute or two regularly works best at this early stage.

Try some of these ideas:

- Read alphabet books, story books and birthday cards to your children. Point to words that are easily matched to a picture, such as *cat* and *hat*.
- Read nursery rhymes together again and again.
- Help your children recognise their names. Start with just the first letter. Point it out when you see it in another word.
- Write words together. Help them trace over words with their fingers while you say the letter.
- Help your children print the letters in their names. Praise their attempts. It's a big step to get little fingers to control a crayon!
- As you read, talk about words together. Ask questions, for example: *Which is the longest word on this page?* and *How is cat different from bat?*
- Help them find words that rhyme in books such as those by Dr Seuss.
- Have them look in a mirror so they can see how their mouths move. This can often help if they get certain sounds mixed up such as *F* and *TH*.
- Label your children's things together, for example help them write their names in their books and on their toys. This shows that spelling has meaning.
- Play games with nonsense words, for example: *Puppy schmuppy*.
- Display your children's drawings and writings. Write notes like: *I'm very proud of you!*
- Use your finger to write a big letter on your child's back and ask them which letter it is and what sound it makes. Let them take a turn writing a letter on your back.



In Pre-primary...

Children learn more about spelling and start to understand the connection between sounds and letters.

Children begin to write the most obvious sounds in a word, such as *WT* for *went* and *KTN* for *kitten*. They can also spell some words they know such as *the* and *to*.

You can support your children and help them improve their writing and spelling skills by trying some of these ideas:

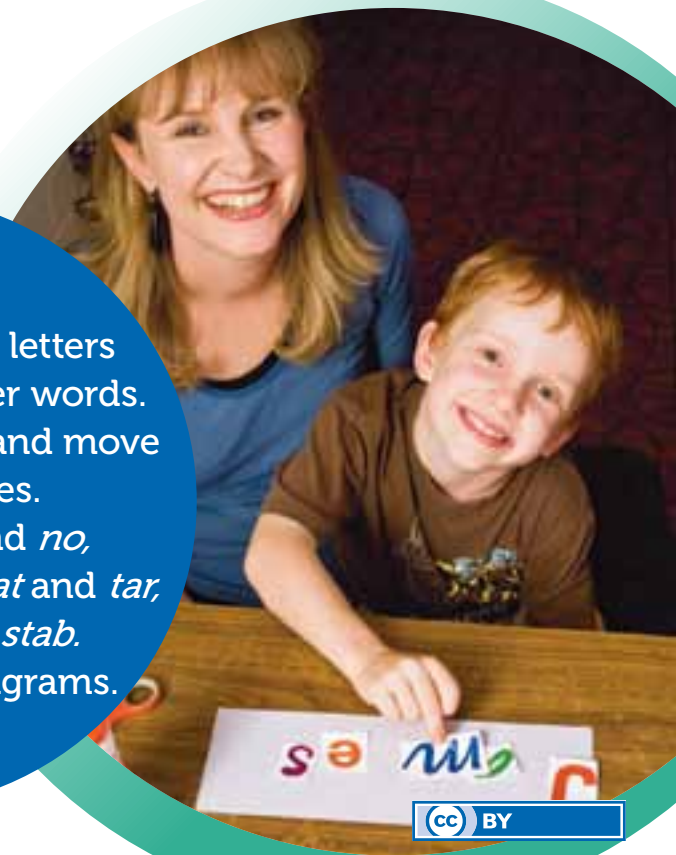
- Use magnetic alphabet letters on the fridge or a magnetic board. Help your children make words.
- Set up a home message board and write messages to your children. Encourage them to leave messages too.
- Write shopping lists with your children. Talk about what you are doing and writing.
- Talk about signs you see when out and about. For example point out your street name so your children understand that words have a purpose.
- Play rhyming games, for example: *What is cute, fluffy and rhymes with mitten?*
- Do a letter search. Search for the letters of their names at home, when you are out and about, and as you take a walk or travel.

- Make good use of junk mail by asking your children to:
 - circle words that have a certain letter such as *M* and a certain sound like *SH*
 - underline all the two letter words, three letter words and so on
 - count how many times they can find a certain word such as *the* as this helps them recognise common words.

Try re-arranging the letters in words to make other words. Start with easy words and move on to harder ones.

For example: *on* and *no*, *dad* and *add*, *art* and *rat* and *tar*, *tabs* and *bats* and *stab*.

These are called anagrams.



Building confidence in Years 1 and 2

As children progress through school they develop a bank of words they recognise by sight. They are also able to match letters with sounds and sound out words they don't know.

You can support your children and help them improve their writing and spelling skills by trying some of these ideas:

- Help them write lists when they play, for example shopping lists.
- Ask your children to 'have a go' at spelling words before giving them the correct answer.
- Help them make lists of their favourite words and read these with them regularly.
- Write messages together for different reasons each day, for example lunch orders, notes and lists.
- Ask them to read their own writing and underline any words they are not sure about before checking with you.
- Read as much as you can with your children. There are many things you can read like newspapers, magazines, comics and books. These all help to build vocabulary skills.
- See how many words can be made from one large word like *together* using only the letters in that word. For example: *he, get, greet, there, otter* and *other*.

See how many words you can find that read the same from the front and the back, for example *dad, pup* and *madam*. These are called **palindromes**.

- Children enjoy writing for a purpose. Make birthday and greeting cards and party invitations. Put all the things that make reading fun into a special colourful box, for example coloured paper, textas, coloured pencils, glitter glue and small stickers.
- Make thumb prints into cartoon characters and write conversations in speech bubbles.
- Play word games with your children like Junior Scrabble® and Boggle®.
- Play What word am I? Think of a word, for example *holiday*. Fill in one letter in the right place, for example __ L _____. Ask your children to guess what the word might be. If their guess is incorrect, fill in another letter, for example H _ L _____. Continue until they guess the whole word.
- Play Word Detective. Ask your children questions like: *Which word rhymes with boat?* and *What word is opposite to long?*
- Play Twenty Questions. Choose words your children are having difficulty spelling. Get them to ask questions to find out what the word is. They can ask 20 questions to identify the word. For example: *Does it have three syllables? Does it start with T? Can we eat it?*



Tackling tricky words

You can help your children gain confidence in trying to spell new words by trying these ideas:

- Ask them to break the word into chunks or syllables. To begin, clap as you say each syllable, for example: birthday is *birth/day* which is two claps; holidays is *hol/i/days* which is three claps.
- Get them to look for little words in bigger words, for example: *believe* is made up of *be, lie* and *eve*; *soldier* is made up of *so, sold, old* and *die*.
- Ask them to sound out words. Talk about rules that help them remember the spelling, such as *E* goes away when *ing* comes to stay, for example *hope* becomes *hoping*.
- When they have tried a word, rather than telling them where they went wrong, write the correct word on a piece of paper for them to see.

Shannon's Game is great for using spelling rules and tactics. The letters have to be guessed in sequence. Start by writing the first letter of the word and a dash for each letter to follow, for example Q _ _ _ _ . Allow 10 guesses for each letter before writing down the next letter, for example Q U _ _ _ . Children soon learn that Q is usually followed by U and that a vowel (A, E, I, O and U) comes next. As the word starts to take shape it becomes easier to guess, for example Q U E S T. This game gives you the chance to talk with your children about the possible choices they can make.



Words on wheels

When you are out and about, use the time to talk about words and play word games.

- Play I Spy in the car or on the bus or train.
- Make up short sentences using the letters on number plates, for example: *BEO* equals *Bob eats oranges*; *CPP* equals *cuddly puppies play*.
- Read street and traffic signs, for example point to a STOP sign, explain that the word says stop and why it is important to stop there. This helps children understand why correct spelling is so important.
- Play word association games where someone says a word and the next person says another word that is connected with it and so on, for example: *beach, fish, chips, seagulls, Eagles, football, Docks*.



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Words on the web

Computer programs often have animations and sounds that attract children and make learning fun.

There are many activities and ideas to help children with spelling. Try the following websites:

W: kidspot.com.au

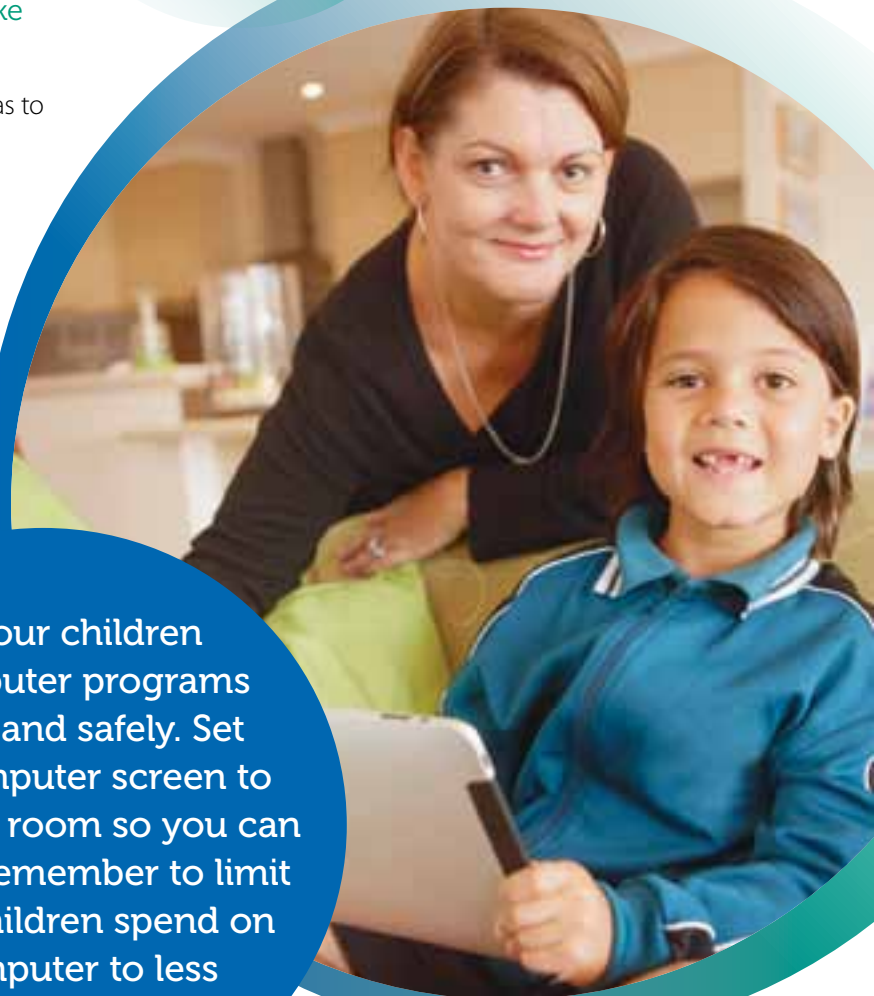
W: readingeggs.com.au

W: kidslearningisfun.com.au

W: kidslife.com.au

If you don't have internet at home, go to a friend's house or your local library. Libraries are a treasure chest for young readers with a wide range of books, DVDs, videos and magazines. To find your local library and opening times telephone 9427 3111.

Help your children use computer programs correctly and safely. Set up the computer screen to face into the room so you can see it too. Remember to limit the time children spend on the computer to less than one hour a day.



What if my children make a spelling mistake?

It is important to give your children lots of praise when they are learning to write and spell. Praise them for 'having a go' even if they get the spelling wrong. Some children need lots of practise and encouragement.

If your child makes a spelling mistake:

- talk about what they have written before talking about the spelling; praise what is right before suggesting any changes
- talk about what to do to find the correct spelling, for example say: *Let's look it up in the dictionary*

- talk about patterns in words, for example:
Both these words have 'ing' at the end
- ask them to underline any words they are unsure about
- ask them if they know how to spell a word and ask them to have a go first, for example say: *What letter does the word start with?* and *Write down what you think the correct spelling is and then I'll help you.* You can come back to those words when they have finished writing.

Good spellers are not perfect spellers. They check if words don't look right.



What if my children struggle with writing and spelling?

Children who are confident with writing and spelling have a great start to school.

It is important to remember that all children progress at different rates. If one of your children is struggling with their writing and spelling:

- talk with the teacher who will explain how they are progressing – they will discuss with you ideas to help improve their skills
- try not to focus too much on spelling while your child is learning to write – this can make the writing experience less fun
- be relaxed and patient – if they feel you are rushed or frustrated, their anxiety will rise and their confidence will drop
- encourage your children to write whenever they can – practise helps build confidence.

Keep examples of writing to show family members and visitors. Pin up some of these examples at work.

What if my children speak another language or dialect?

Children need time to hear the sounds of the English language.

It may take up to two years or longer for them to hear and say all these sounds.

You can help by showing your children the most obvious sounds in a word, such as: *STP* for *stop* and *CR* for *car*.

You can also help by showing them common spelling patterns such as *ed* and *ing*.

Ask your children to keep diaries during the holidays and write something each day. Write captions under photos.



Handy ideas

- Apostrophes show when:
 - something belongs to one person/thing, for example: *the tail of the rat* becomes *the rat's tail*
 - things belong to more than one person/thing, for example: *the toys of the boys* becomes *the boys' toys*
 - letters have been left out of a word, for example: *can not* becomes *can't*
- *E* goes away when *ing* comes to stay, for example: *hope* becomes *hoping*.
- *I* before *E* except after *C*, for example: *chief, piece; receive* and *ceiling*.
- Silent *E* at the end of a word can change the vowel sound, for example: *cap* becomes *cape*.
- Add an *S* to make a plural of most words, for example *star* becomes *stars*. For words that end in a 'hissing' sound, for example words that end in *S, CH, SH*, add *ES* to the word. For example *one class* becomes *many classes*.

Put these ideas on a piece of paper and stick them on the fridge or bedroom door.





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