

Beginning to write

What is involved in writing?

To write, children need to be able to:

- listen to and identify separate sounds in spoken words
- know how to write the letters that match the sounds they hear in words
- control a pencil to form the letters
- be 'willing to try' to write
- have a real purpose for writing.

Why is drawing important for writing?

Drawing helps children to:

- build ideas for writing
- gain confidence to use paper and pencils
- build hand control for writing letters
- learn to add details and make ideas clearer.

How might preparatory children try to write?

Preparatory children explore writing by using:

- role-play writing — using lines and squiggles that represent the flow or 'action' of writing
- alphabetic writing — using strings of letters and letter-like symbols
- copying words written by an adult, displayed on a wall or found in books
- early phonetic writing — writing letters that represent the sounds they hear in words, e.g. the word 'caterpillar' may be written 'c', 'cr' or 'ctuplr'.



How can I help children use letters and sounds to write words?

1. Talk about writing, as you write. See the supporting learning resource *Talking as you write*.
2. Help children to break words into parts, e.g. cat/er/pill/ar (syllables) and p-a-t (beginning, middle and end sounds).
3. Help children to name and write the letter/sound at the beginning of a word, e.g. write 'g' for goat. It is okay if preparatory children only write the beginning sound/letter for a word.
4. When children can hear a sound at the end of the word, help the children to name and write the letter/sound at the end of a word, e.g. write 'fd' for friend.

5. Middle sounds are harder for children to hear and write. You can:

- write a word under children's writing and talk about the middle sounds
- ask children to draw a line so you can write the middle sounds, e.g. child writes 's ____ l' for 'school'. You write the middle sounds ('choo').

6. Encourage children to read their writing to you, e.g. say *Tell me what your writing says* or *What did you want this writing to say?*

7. Praise children for writing the letters/sounds they could hear. Show them how you would write the same word(s), e.g. if the child writes 'l wt v', you can write 'I watched a video.'

Should children copy words?

Children can copy words **sometimes**. Talk about the letters/sounds in the word, as the children copy the word. Make sure children know it is okay for them to 'have a go' at writing words without copying, e.g. write the sounds they hear in words.

Should I write for the child?

It is okay for you to write for children. This helps children to develop the 'flow' of ideas for later writing. Ask children to help to write by:

- copying/tracing a letter/word you have written or 'dotted' for them to trace

word

- writing a letter(s) they know/can hear, e.g. a letter from their name
- adding their own writing under your writing (using role-play/alphabetic writing).

How can I build children's confidence to write?

1. Praise children when they help you to write or 'have a go' at writing by themselves.

Point out to children how their writing looks like 'real' writing, e.g.

- You've used lines and circles just like real letters.
- I can see a 'c' that is like the 'c' in your name.
- You copied two of the letters in the right order.

2. Make sure children know that it is okay to approximate writing or have a go.