



Early Reading and Writing Guidance



Your children have been introduced to the 'Jolly Phonics' scheme, which is a thorough foundation for reading and writing. It uses the 'synthetic phonics' method of teaching letter sounds in a way that is **fun** and **multi-sensory**. Children learn how to use the letter sounds to read and write words.

Parental support is important to all children as they benefit from plenty of praise, encouragement, and of course practice, whilst learning. You should be guided by the pace at which your child wants to go. If interest is being lost, leave it for a while and then come back to it later. Not all children find it easy to learn and blend sounds. It is important to remember that this is not because they are unintelligent, but because they may have difficulty remembering symbols and words. It can also be reflected in your child's developmental stage: they may be immature and not yet interested. Extra practice will help with fluency in reading and support your child's development at home and at school.

The five basic skills for reading and writing **words** are:

1. Learning the letter sounds (phonemes)
2. Learning letter formation
3. Blending
4. Identifying sounds in words
5. Spelling the tricky words

The children have been learning the 42 main sounds that make up words in the English language (this includes digraphs, which are two sounds put together to represent a different sound such as 'sh'). They have also been learning letter formation and orientation. This is a continuous process which will lead towards cursive writing (when ready).

Once the children are confident and secure with knowing all their letter sounds, they will then be ready to start blending.

Blending is the process of saying the individual sounds in a word and then running them together to make the word, for example, sounding out *d- o- g* and making '*dog*'. It is a technique every child will need to learn, and it improves with practice. To start with you should sound out the word slowly and clearly, to assess if a child can hear it, giving the answer word if necessary. Some children may take longer than others to distinguish this. You should then say the sounds quickly in order for them to hear the entire word. Your child may find it is easier if the first sound is said slightly louder. Try little and often with words like *b-u-s*, *c-a-t* and *h-e-n*. We will be providing blending word lists for you to take home and practise (when your child is ready).

Remember that some sounds (digraphs) are represented by two letters, such as *sh*. Children should sound out the digraph (*sh*), not the individual letters (*s - h*). With practice they will be able to blend the digraph as one sound in a word. So, a word like *rain* should be sounded out *r-ai-n*, and *feet* as *f-ee-t*. It is important to be able to distinguish between a blend (such as *st*) and a digraph (such as *sh*). In a blend the two individual sounds, *s* and *t* can each be heard. In a digraph this is not so. When an adult models the process of sounding out a blend encourage your child to say the two sounds as one unit, so *fl-a-g* not *f-l-a-g*. This will lead to greater fluency when reading.

Once the children have learnt the sounds they will begin to experiment with writing. This is when we encourage them to identify individual sounds in words by 'sounding out' the word first. 'Copy writing'* is appropriate when modelling the process for children, but it doesn't give them the skills to write independently. Please encourage the use of phonetic spelling, such as 'frend' (friend) as this will boost confidence and can be corrected later on, when the child is competent at writing with more fluency and accuracy. Spelling patterns are important, but if a child is corrected too soon, it can lead to a lack of confidence and unwillingness to 'have a go'. An example of phonetic writing may be when a child has attempted to write the sentence: '*Can you come to my house for tea?*' and has formulated the following: '*can yoo cum to mie hous for tee?*' If you look at each of the phonetic attempts you can clearly hear the sounds and digraphs that have been used, which is great! This strategy enables children to communicate effectively much earlier on until they have learnt the **many** spelling patterns and alternative spellings that make up our complicated language!

**Please ensure that when your child sees you write you use lower-case letters and not capital letters (except when used properly, such as beginning of names and sentences etc).*

Some words in English have an irregular spelling and cannot be read by blending, such as *said*, *was* and *one*. Unfortunately, many of these are common or 'high frequency' words. The irregular parts have to be remembered. We call these 'tricky words'. Tricky Words are words that need to be recognised 'on sight' so essentially they need to be learned by memory. We will be sending a list of 'Tricky Words' home each week for you to practise with your children soon. Here are a few suggestions to help practise these words without making the task too monotonous!

- Cut up the tricky words and put them in a special box (or a hat like 'Inky the Mouse's hat - ask your child!). Then, take out a word and see if they remember it; say it, practise saying it and perhaps think of a sentence with that word in it.
- Look, Say, Cover, Write and Check. Look at the word to see which bit is tricky. Ask your child to try writing the word in the air saying the letters. Cover the word over and see if your child can write it correctly. Check to make sure.
- Say it as it sounds perhaps even making a little joke about it. Say the word so each sound is heard. For example, the word *was* is pronounced 'wass', to rhyme with *mass*, the word *Monday* is said as 'mon' (day)

Remember that learning should be fun and 'testing' your child, or making them feel under pressure will only inhibit self-esteem and could put your child off. Try to make up a game and practise in a way that makes the process enjoyable. It is also useful to pick an appropriate time to practise, (i.e.) put up the words on the fridge and look at them whilst having breakfast, or laminate them and put them up on the wall at bath time. Please don't spend any more than 5 minutes a day on this and remember that sitting your child down straight after school, or when they are tired isn't likely to be the most receptive time to learn.

Once your child knows all the letter sounds and is confidently and fluently blending words and consistently remembering tricky words, they will be introduced to appropriate reading books. We have a range of levelled books, which the children will be reading, with an adult in groups at school. Following this, when ready, the children will be able to take the range of reading books home on a regular basis to consolidate their learning and to develop confidence and fluency.

Once there is fluency in reading, the next most important skill is comprehension and understanding of words in context. This can be developed by asking a child questions about a story they have just read.

Please refer to the supplement 'Ideas for Shared Reading' which describes key elements to the successful development of reading and writing.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any queries or concerns about the above.

Thank you.

Mr. Poote