

Help your child read, write and spell

Reading is essential for your child's success. Reading with your child and helping them with writing and spelling can help boost their achievement. It's important to practise reading and spelling at home because your child needs these skills to progress at school.

Reading

Children who read outside class time are five times more likely to read above the expected level for their age. At home, make sure your child has regular reading practice and check they understand what they read. To help your child with reading:

- when you read to your child, make the experience interactive - ask questions about the story, the pictures, and what they think of the characters
- as their reading skills grow, let them turn the tables until they're reading to you
- use dictionaries together for difficult words - a picture dictionary can make exploring language more interesting
- enrol your child at the local library so they can read new books regularly
- find out themes that catch your child's imagination at school - and help follow it up with more reading
- when you come across an unusual or funny-sounding word, help your child find out what it means and write it on the fridge door with magnetic letters

Reading for older children

As your child gets older encourage them to pick up other books around the house to become familiar with adult language. Suggest a reading list, and encourage your child to write what they think about the books they've read.

Writing and spelling

It's easier to get into good handwriting habits early on than to put right poor writing later, when the pressure of schoolwork is greater. The same goes for spelling.

To help your child see writing and spelling skills as fun, important and skills to be proud of:

- write words and sentences for your child to copy
- stress the links between drawing and writing, and make sure your child always signs finished artwork
- encourage your child to be inspired by examples of beautiful handwriting in museums, galleries and books

Older children can develop their writing and social skills together by finding penfriends through school or clubs, or keeping in touch with friends met on holiday.

Developing maths skills in everyday life

Successful learning depends on having problem solving skills, thinking logically and ability to read and write.

Primary school children usually have a daily maths lesson, but an easy way to boost their skills and motivation is by showing them how useful number skills are in almost everything they do.

Children can have fun:

- measuring their height and working out how much they've grown
- on car journeys - playing number-plate games, adding and subtracting with road signs, thinking about speed by dividing distance by time
- at the shops - weighing fruit and vegetables, budgeting with pocket money, working out the relative value of products by comparing prices and weight
- in the kitchen - with weighing and measuring, temperature and timings
- making models and origami shapes

Working out maths

Make a game out of putting little problems to your child and letting them reason things through, prompting as little as you can. For example, while cooking ask them to work out the amounts if a recipe is doubled.

Praise your child for trying, even if they get stuck or get things wrong.

New experiences and discoveries are always stimulating, and they don't have to be expensive or elaborate:

- if you go for a country walk, collect different types of leaves, look for insects or signs of wild animals, and think about why metal goes rusty or lichen grows on one side of trees
- introduce your child to simple map-reading using a road atlas or map of your area
- on holiday, be aware of all the things that are different to home - buildings, accents, languages, clothes, food and customs
- find out if there are clubs in your area which will interest your child - ask the local library or leisure centre for information

Helping young people with career choices

As a parent or carer, talk to your child about jobs that interest them. You can help them to research different careers or find out skills and qualifications needed to do certain jobs. You can be a positive influence on your child's choices.

Your child's career plans

Your child will need to make decisions at different times. It's important to ask them about careers from time to time.

Get them to chat about the jobs they see other people doing. This could be someone they know or admire. It could be people they pass on the street, see on television or in magazines. You could also discuss types of jobs that might be relevant to their interests, skills or aspirations.

Listen to your child and discuss their options

To help your child with career planning, it's important you:

- listen, don't judge
- are open to ideas and encourage them to explore all their options
- keep in mind that your child's choices and decisions should be based on their aspirations and abilities, not on what you think they should do
- remember that not everyone has a clear idea what they want to do so your child's career ideas may change as they get older

Helping your child plan a career

Once your child has some ideas about what they would like to do, encourage them to do some research. You can help them find out what is needed to work in a certain career.

As well as helping them decide on their next steps, you will also be helping them to develop the decision-making skills important in adult life. They'll need to consider the pros and cons of various options, make a decision based on the information available - then put their plan into action.

How you can help your child's future

To help your child to think about different choices, you can encourage them to:

- talk about their career ideas and future plans
- research various careers
- know about options available in education, employment and training
- discuss ideas and options with teachers or careers advisers at school or college
- find out about training, college, and university entrance requirements as well as what is needed for jobs they are interested in

- develop their skills by taking part in clubs and activities, both within and outside of school - this will help them when they are applying for courses or jobs
- find out about the world of work through work experience and extra-curricular activities by talking to relatives and family friends about the kinds of work they do
- go to careers events their school organises