

Hadfield Nursery

Letters and Sounds



The first steps to reading and writing

Speaking and listening are the foundations for reading and writing

Ways you can support your children at home: talking and listening

- **Make time to listen to your child talking** – as you meet them from their setting or school, as you walk, or travel home by car, in the supermarket as you shop, at meal times, bath times, bedtimes – anytime!
- **Switch off the TV, radio and mobile phones** – and really listen!
- **Show that you are interested in what they are talking about** – look at your child, smile, nod your head, ask a question or make a response to show that you really have been listening.
- **Make a collection of different toy creatures** – e.g. a duck, a snake, an alien – say the sound it might make as you play together, e.g. 'quack-quack', 'ssssssss', 'yuk-yuk', and encourage your child to copy you.
- **Listen at home** – switch off the TV and listen to the sounds both inside and outside the home. Can your child tell you what they heard, in the order in which they heard it?
- **Play-a-tune** – and follow me! Make or buy some simple shakers, drums and beaters – play a simple tune and ask your child to copy. Have fun!
- **Use puppets** and toys to make up stories or retell known ones. Record your child telling the story and play it back to them.

The importance of speech sounds

As children grow older they begin to understand more about the sounds of our language and they are able to join in with rhymes, songs and stories by clapping, stamping and skipping. This is an important stage as the children's ears are learning to tune into all the different sounds around them. Playing with sounds and tuning your child's ears into sounds will develop phonological awareness, that is the ability to discriminate different sounds. Over time this will help your child develop an understanding that words are made up of different sounds (phonemes) and they will be able to hear the different sounds in a word. Gradually they will learn to match sounds to letters (graphemes). This is phonic knowledge. They use this knowledge when they are reading and writing.

Ways you can support your children at home: sound talk

This is a very supportive activity to play with your child.

Try breaking down simple words when you are giving instructions or asking questions such as 'Can you find your h-a-t hat?' 'Where is the c-a-t cat?' 'Sit on the s-ea-t seat' 'Eat your f-oo-d food'. It is really important to say the sounds (phonemes) aloud, in order, all through the word.

Prior to this your child should have experienced lots of the environmental, instrumental and body percussion, rhythm and rhyming, alliteration, and voice sounds activities to tune in their ears.

Letters and Sounds – Phase 1

In this ongoing phase your child will be learning to:

- have fun with sounds
- listen carefully
- develop their vocabulary
- speak confidently to you, other adults and other children
- tune into sounds
- listen and remember sounds
- talk about sounds
- understand that spoken words are made up of different sounds.

Phase 1 consists of seven interlinking parts:

- Environmental sounds
- Instrumental sounds
- Body percussion
- Rhythm and rhyme
- Alliteration (words that begin with the same sound)
- Voice sounds
- Oral blending and segmenting.

You can help your child develop in each of these by trying some of the ideas below. Remember that all these activities should be fun and interactive. Give your child lots of encouragement and cuddles as you play alongside. Smiles and praise will help develop a sense of achievement and build confidence.

This is all oral (spoken) – your child will not yet be expected to match the letter to the sound. The emphasis is on developing the ability to distinguish sounds and create sounds.

Ways you can support your children at home: environmental sounds

- Go on a listening walk – when walking down the road make a point of listening to different sounds: cars revving, people talking, birds singing, dogs barking. When you get home try and remember all the sounds you heard. You could try taping the sounds to listen to again or try reproducing them yourselves using your voice or instruments.
- Make sounds using a range of props such as running a stick along a fence and tapping on the bin lid.
- Invent a secret family 'knock' for entering rooms.
- Play sound lotto. Commercial sound lotto can be purchased from many children's toy stores but making your own from your sound walk would be far more rewarding.

Ways you can support your children at home: instrumental sounds

- Make your own musical instruments using cardboard rolls, tins, dried peas, beans, stones. Shake these loudly, softly, as you are marching, skipping or stomping. Play 'guess what's inside the instrument'.
- Sing known songs loudly and then softly, stretch words in known songs and add new words or sounds.
- Listen to a range of music with your child from rap to classical. Encourage your child to move in response to the variety of musical styles and moods.

Ways you can support your children at home: body percussion

- Learn some action rhymes such as 'wind the bobbin up'.
- Play some commercially produced tapes and CDs. Clap along with familiar rhymes and learn new ones.
- Listen to the sounds your feet make when walking/running/skipping: slowly, softly, fast, stomping hard, in flip flops, boots, high heels.
- Try different types of claps: clap your hands softly, fast and make a pattern for your child to follow. Do the same clapping your thighs or stomping with your feet. Tap your fingers. Click your tongue.
- Invent a special family clap routine for when someone does something really well.

Ways you can support your children at home: rhythm and rhyme:

- Get into the rhythm of our language: bounce your child on your knee to the rhythm of a song or nursery rhyme, march or clap to a chant or poem.
- Help your child move to the rhythm of a song or rhyme.
- Read or say poems, songs, nursery songs and rhyming stories as often as you can, try to use gestures, tap regular beats and pauses to emphasise the rhythm of the piece.
- Add percussion to mark the beats using your hands, feet or instruments.
- Try out some rhythmic chanting such as 'two, four, six, eight, hurry up or we'll be late' or 'bip bop boo, who are you?'

Ways you can support your children at home: alliteration (words that begin with the same sound)

- Alliteration is a lot of fun to play around with. Your child's name can be a good place to start, e.g. Say 'Gurpreet gets the giggles', 'Milo makes music', 'Naheema's nose', 'Carl caught a cat', 'Jolly Jessie jumped', 'Tina is talking'. Encourage other family members to have a go, e.g. 'Mummy munches muffins', 'Daddy is doing the dishes'.
- Emphasise alliteration in songs and stories, e.g. 'Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers'.
- Play around with familiar songs to emphasise alliteration such as 'Old MacDonald had some sheep, shoes, shorts, with a sh sh here and a sh sh there'.
- Identify the odd one out, e.g. cat, cup, boy, car.
- Make up little nonsense stories together using lots of alliteration.
- Collect items from the park, the garden and around the house that start with the same sound.
- When shopping think about items you are buying and say 'A tall tin of tomatoes', 'A lovely little lemon'. Encourage your child to do the same.

Ways you can support your children at home: voice sounds

- Repeat your infant's vocalisations.
- Make fun noises or nonsense words.
- Say words in different ways (fast, slowly, high, low, using a funny voice).
- 'Sing' known songs using only sounds, e.g. 'la, la, la', and ask your child to guess the song.
- Vary your tempo and pitch when reading stories.
- Make voices for characters when reading stories.
- Read or tell sound stories. Your local library or book store will be able to point out some very good books that encourage sound making as you read the story. This is huge fun and can involve all the family.

Ways you can support your children at home: oral blending and segmenting

This is all oral (spoken). Your child will not be expected to match the letter to the sound at this stage. The emphasis is on helping children to hear the separate sounds in words and to create spoken sounds.

Oral blending and segmenting is a later skill that will be important when it comes time to read and write. Being able to hear the separate sounds within a word and then blend them together to understand that word is really important.

Blending is a vital skill for reading. The separate sounds (phonemes) of the word are spoken aloud, in order, all through the word, and are then merged together into the whole word. This merging together is called blending. For example, the adult would say **c-a-t = cat**.

Segmenting is a vital skill for spelling. The whole word is spoken aloud, then broken up into its separate sounds (phonemes) in order, all through the word. For example, the adult would say **cat = c-a-t**.



Ways you can support your children at home: other things to do at home

- Turn off the TV so you can listen to and talk to your child.
- Read every day to your child.
- Set up a place where your child can experiment with mark making both outside and inside using gloop, paint, pens, stamps, and stencils onto a variety of surfaces such as paper, cardboard and material.
- Collect a variety of pencils and pens, and keep them handy for your child.
- Create a special writing bag to keep little writing tools in for travelling in the car or visiting the doctor's. Change the contents regularly.



Ways you can support your children at home: what to do if your child is reluctant to read or write at home

Relax! It is important not to worry if your child shows no inclination to write at home; the important thing is to keep on sharing books and talking together. There is no need to insist that your child does some writing – more often than not they will choose to do so when they have a real reason to.

Reading

- Make sure your child sees you reading.
- Read **to** your child. Show you like the book. Bring stories to life by using loud/soft/scary voices – let yourself go!
- Spread books around your house for your child to dip into.
- Let your child choose what **they** would like to read – books, comics, catalogues.
- Read favourite books over and over again. Enjoy!

Writing

- Make sure your child sees you writing.
- Compose an email together inviting a friend over to tea.
- Make words together using magnetic letters.
- Make up a story together about one of their toys. You write for them, repeating the sentences as you write. When complete they can draw pictures to go with it.
- Buy stickers of a favourite film or TV programme – and make a book about it.

Useful websites and leaflets for more information

www.parentscentre.gov.uk/foragegroup/3to5years/readandwritetogether

This link to the Parents Centre website gives some really good ideas about how you can enjoy sharing books with your child and tells you a bit more about phonics.

www.parentscentre.gov.uk/foragegroup/5to7years/alittlereadinggoesalongway

This link gives ideas about how to help your child as they are learning to read.

www.read-count.org/index.asp

A website for you and your child to explore together – it will give you some ideas about reading with your child and has online games for young children to play with you and on their own. It also has ideas for games to play away from the computer. The Basic Skills website will keep you updated on a range of literacy developments: www.basic-skills.co.uk.

www.bookstart.co.uk

This website provides information about the national Bookstart scheme and the Bookstart packs that your child will receive as a baby, a toddler and at age three to four. It also gives information about sharing books with your child and you can find out about Bookstart events in your area which you can go to with your child.

You can get 'Learning Together' leaflets – 'The road to reading' and 'Making their mark – children's early writing' (and other leaflets covering a range of topics) from Early Education, 136 Cavell Street, London, E1 2JA. Telephone 020 7539 5400. You can also download them from the website www.early-education.org.uk.

www.talktoyourbaby.org.uk

This website provides lots of information for parents and carers of babies and young children, and suggestions of activities, features, DVDs, books and events that are both useful and fun. You can have their free newsletter emailed to you directly.

www.ican.org.uk

This website provides lots of information for parents and teachers on the importance of speaking and listening skills for young children's development. Although aimed at early communication development there is a lot of very useful information and materials such as *Chatter Matters* that can be downloaded from the website and some free materials can be ordered.

www.nationalliteracytrust.org.uk/familyreading/parents

A wealth of information about how to make reading and writing fun for you and all your family. Promotes their campaign to make 'every home a reading home'. Many links to further websites.

www.lettersandsounds.com

This website provides information and resources to support the letters and sounds phonic programme published by the Department for Education and Skills in 2007. It aims to build children's speaking and listening skills in their own right as well as to prepare children for learning to read by developing their phonic knowledge and skills.