

Developing young writers

Early experiences of writing will have significant influence on children's views and feelings about writing as they get older and learn the necessary skills to become successful writers. Children must be supported in their earliest years to develop a positive view of themselves as writers, develop an interest in the purpose of writing, and to begin to recognise the power of writing as a tool for communication.

There are several different aspects to consider to fully prepare early years children for writing:

- Children need to develop their **communication skills**. Through hands on experiences, engaging conversations, playful interactions, books, stories and song children should have opportunities to develop expressive language skills and build their vocabulary.
- Children need to develop the **physical skills** needed for writing. Children must have opportunities to engage in a wide range of physical activity to develop their gross and fine motor skills, specifically developing muscles and coordination in their core, shoulders, arms, wrists, hands, and fingers.
- Children need to develop an **interest and understanding of writing** as a form of communication. They should have opportunities to experience and experiment both with using writing for meaningful purposes, and for the simple pleasure of making marks and writing.

Underpinning the planning for, and teaching of these skills, is the intention to support children to develop a love of writing.

Tips, ideas, and suggestions of learning opportunities to support children to develop the dispositions needed to develop a love of writing:

- **Prioritise opportunities for children to communicate** within the learning environment – ensure there are daily opportunities for children to speak, to listen, to be spoken with, and listened to throughout the day. Allow adequate time to ensure these interactions are of a high quality, providing children with time to think and respond. These opportunities for conversation and communication should both be focussed on things the children are interested in and on the introduction of new, engaging objects, ideas and themes that will enhance children’s vocabularies. Children should have opportunities to be included in one to one and group conversations with both children and adults.
- **Incorporate writing opportunities across the provision** (not just in the ‘writing area’), this provides children with the opportunity to include writing for a purpose in their play, and to engage in writing/drawing/mark-making throughout the learning environment (ensure that writing materials are continuously re-stocked and presented in an inviting way).
- **Ensure story time is a planned for, prioritised and valued time of the day**, where children have the opportunity and time to be immersed in a broad range of high-quality texts.
- Plan **daily opportunities for children to see writing modelled** and used for a purpose, for example writing a list of the children’s ideas, or writing a note to another staff member for children to deliver.
- **Notice, acknowledge and praise** children’s engagement with drawing, writing, and mark-making materials. Provide constructive positive feedback, which describes what they’ve done.



Learning Opportunity :	Activity
<p>Self-registration – Use this daily opportunity to encourage children to use writing for a purpose.</p>	<p>Be creative and change the way you ask children to self-register – For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A question for children to respond to in a yes/no column, • Stories to vote for, • Magnetic letters to find, • Different writing tools to use to write their name, • Draw a face to show how they’re feeling today
<p>Storytelling – When they engage in imaginative play children develop their own narratives, devising and telling stories.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide resources and interesting spaces in the classroom to support imaginative play with construction, puppets, small world toys and characters, as well as through role play. Add mini-me’s (photographs of the children on stands) to extend the play. • Practice storytelling together, use props or story sacks to provide starting points for stories, sometimes these stories can be written down and revisited.
<p>Making books – Writing their own books enables children to both become authors and become the experts at reading their book.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making books about shared class/setting experiences or about the children themselves supports children’s understanding of both reading and writing. For example, a book based on <i>Brown Bear, Brown Bear what do you see?</i> including all the children in the class, a book about a class outing, or a book about everyone’s dream pet. • Book making materials can also be made available for children’s own story writing in the classroom, their books may be self-written, or an adult can scribe. Individual journals or memory books where children can add photos or special drawings and annotations themselves will also support children’s understanding of books.
<p>Provocations – Support new vocabulary and</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Present unusual or new items to investigate, explore or play with. New or exciting materials will capture children’s attention and stimulate thinking, talk and imagination. For example, an unusual fruit or vegetable, a

encourage communication.	natural material such as a large shell, seaweed, fossil or bone, a huge cardboard box, a very long piece of string, or a survival blanket.
Building muscles and coordination – A broad range of learning opportunities will enable all children to engage and strengthen their fine and gross motor skills.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clay and other malleable materials will strengthen children’s arm and hand muscles. • Provide opportunities outside for children to engage in running, climbing, balancing, jumping and ball play to support development of gross motor skills. • Action rhymes and songs will also support development of control and coordination. • Mark-making opportunities on a large scale, on the floor and on a wall or fence – using paint brushes, water, chalk, and marker pens. • Construction materials – both small and large, will support strength and coordination (enhance large construction areas with recycled crates, restaurant size food containers, cable spools and carpet roll tubes). • Loose parts – Provide open-ended materials for placing and arranging, threading, stacking, and sorting. • Creative play – Including a variety of tools and joining materials will support children to develop dexterity. For example, drawing tools, scissors, tape, glue sticks, paintbrushes, hole punchers, staplers and string.
Mark-making, drawing, and writing – Offer a broad variety of tools and opportunities in continuous provision to encourage children to engage in, explore and experiment with mark-making, drawing, and writing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mobile drawing/writing tools – clipboards, notebooks and writing tools that can be easily transported by the children indoors and out (use cutlery drainers or make crisp tube buckets). • Real writing tools (biro’s, notebooks, diaries, envelopes, calendars etc.) provided alongside a range of role play opportunities (office, shop, cafe, home, garage etc). • Selection of writing tools – felt pens, pencils, coloured pencils, chalk, paint dabbers, paintbrushes, large/marker pens, whiteboards, plain paper, lined paper, notebooks. • Opportunities to make marks in different materials – trays of fine sand/glitter, cornflour, shaving foam, clay. Children can use fingers, spoons, sticks or paintbrushes to make marks. • Use squeeze bottles of water or buckets and paint brushes to make marks on fences and paving. • Search for natural objects that could be used to create marks with paint or mud, such as sticks, leaves and grass.

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pour water over soil to create a muddy canvas – use sticks to create marks and patterns.• Watercolour paints – set up a small station for two or three children to use the watercolour paints together (children will need to be taught the skill of how to use these paints).• Large sheets of paper/card on the floor or table top that children can draw and write on together. Surprise the children with a paper pathway all through the classroom (charity shop or car boot sale wallpaper rolls are perfect for this).• Provide card, masking tape and stands for children to make labels/signs for their work to name it, present it to others, or prevent it from being tidied away!• Providing materials for drawing/writing during transition/waiting times, when children might usually be asked to look at a book – offer small notebooks and pens/pencils or whiteboards and pens as an alternative. |
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