



Supporting Literacy
Development -
A guide for Parents and
Carers

What can I do to support my child in developing their literacy?

As a parent you play a significant role in your child's learning by setting expectations, nurturing curiosity, and encouraging a love of learning. As a starting point, you can help build your child's literacy through:

- * being positive about their literacy experiences and praising effort and perseverance;
- * letting your child know that everyone can be successful;
- * seizing everyday opportunities to capitalise on literacy development;
- * involving your child in literacy-related activities;
- * exploring literacy with your child—share and discuss stories, books, news articles, blogs;
- * learning alongside your child and encourage a sharing of literacy concepts.

Helping your child to become increasingly literate does not require an A Level or university degree in English. It means:

- * encouraging them to try, then keep trying;
- * encouraging them to talk through processes, ideas, thoughts and feelings;
- * supporting them while they do homework (which means encouraging them and taking an interest, but not doing the work/thinking for them);
- * modelling literacy with them (including shared reading, discussing topical issues, writing for purpose);
- * getting them to check their work (in all subjects, not just English), paying particular attention to the accuracy of spelling, punctuation and grammar;
- * encouraging them to engage with functional literacy activities:
 - ◇ cooking (reading, processing and following a recipe)
 - ◇ entering information on a form, (for example, when opening a bank account, getting an insurance quotation)
 - ◇ reading pamphlets/brochures in order to plan a day out/family activity
 - ◇ reading a newspaper/news app and discussing topical issues
 - ◇ creating a shopping list
 - ◇ engaging in conversation with friends, relatives, new acquaintances—and recognising the difference in the types of conversation
- * not saying “I was never good at English”. Literacy capability is not inherited but attitudes are contagious!

What can I do to support my child in developing their literacy?

The most effective thing that any parent can do to support their child's literacy skills is to encourage and foster a love of reading. If your child isn't a 'natural' reader, i.e., doesn't like fiction/novels, do not despair. We live in a world where we have information at our fingertips and more and more children are turning away from weighty tomes in favour of quick and easily accessible texts. However, whether your child is scrolling through social media; engaging with a blog about their hobby or interest; or, getting lost in Manga, they are still reading. Talk to them about what they have read; show an interest in reading something similar; and, model good practice by turning off the screens every now and then and reading an actual newspaper, magazine or book yourself.

For more tips on supporting the development of the specific literacy skills of oracy, reading and writing, please look at the information on the following pages.

How can I help my child with oracy?

Speaking and listening skills are not only important for English but for everything we do. Talking with your child—and listening to them—will help them to develop their ability to listen, respond and to speak for different purposes. You can ask them to talk about their views on topics of interest; to discuss points for and against a certain idea; and, to sum up what you have just said to them. The sentence starters that follow may help to develop your child's ability to agree, to challenge, and to develop and justify their thoughts.

To agree...

Yes, I agree with your point about ...

I support the idea that ...

That's a great point—to build on it, I would say ...

To challenge...

I think we should consider the alternative view that ...

I disagree and actually believe that ...

Could it not be the case that... ?

To develop ...

To add to your point, I would like to say ...

What do you think would be the effect of ...?

What evidence would you offer to back up what you say?

How can I get my child talking?

Engaging your child in conversation can be difficult—and can become increasingly difficult as the teenage years progress! For most children, this is an entirely normal part of the developmental process and signals that your child is becoming more independent. However, even teenagers need to know that the adults in their lives are still connected to what they have going on so the following sentence stems might help to encourage talking.

What do you think about ...?

I think it's really interesting that ...
What are your thoughts about ...?

I'd be really interested to hear about what your ideas are on ...

Build confidence with these sentence stems ...

I've really enjoyed talking with you about ...

That's a great idea and you expressed it really clearly.

You've really made me think about ...
Thank you!

How can I help my child with reading?

Most children, when they are learning to read, will begin by reading words, then sentences, then paragraphs. However, even when reading fluently, some children will simply be reading these words, sentences and paragraphs in a way that sounds accurate and cohesive but they will not be interpreting, comprehending and processing what they are reading. It is important to remember that reading is about more than just listening to your child read aloud or sitting quietly and reading together. It should be enjoyable—but it should also be interactive. By making reading interactive, your child will develop their thinking and their understanding of texts. Don't worry if your child does not want to sit and read a novel; find a text (non-fiction is just as good as fiction) that they are interested in and read that. What is most important is that your child reads every day and the recommendation is that they should read for at least twenty minutes.

Why Can't I Skip My 20 Minutes of Reading Tonight?

Student "A"
reads

20 minutes
each day.

3900 minutes
in a school
year

1,950,000
words



Student "B"
reads

5 minutes
each day.

975 minutes
in a school
year

305,000
words



Student "C"
reads

1 minute each
day.

195 minutes in
a school year

9,000 words



By the end of Year 11, Student "A" will have read for the equivalent of 54 whole school days. Student "B" will have read for only 13 school days. Which student would you expect to have a better vocabulary and a better understanding of sentence construction and punctuation? Which student would you expect to be more successful in school ... and in life?

Tactics to help your child read ...

Adjusting your reading rate	When you speed up or slow down your reading depending on the purpose and/or the difficulty of the text.
Self-questioning	When you generate your own questions before, during and after reading to clarify meaning or check understanding.
Sounding out	When you try to identify an unknown word by saying the sounds of individual letters or letter combinations, blending them together and arriving at a pronunciation.
Chunking	When you identify an unknown word by breaking words into larger units (chunks) and then attaching sounds to the units.
Determining importance	When you make decisions about what is important in a text and what is not.
Summarising / paraphrasing	A reading strategy involving condensing information into the most important ideas.
Inference	'Reading between the lines' or looking for the hidden meaning in a text. Looking for the obvious and less obvious points using clues and suggestions the writer leaves a reader.
Reading on	When you continue to read when encountering difficulties or unknown words.
Consulting a reference	A reading strategy used to unlock word meaning by referring to a variety of sources.
Rereading	When you go back over parts of texts or whole texts to clarify meaning or to assist with word identification.

Pre, during and post reading questions

Questions to ask before reading:

- What do you want to find out by reading this text?
- How will reading this text help you?
- Why do you think this text was written?
- Does this text remind you of anything else you have read/encountered? What?
- What do you already know that might link to this text?
- How is this text organised? (Headline, sub-headings, images, paragraphs, chapters, columns)
- What do you think this text will be about? Why do you think this?
- Who do you think this text has been written for?
- Why do you think the writer chose to write this text?

Questions to ask during reading:

- What do you think ... means?
- How can you work out the meaning of ...?
- What are the main ideas in what we have read so far?
- Do you know any words that are similar to ...?
- How is this text similar/different to other texts you have read?
- Have you seen anything on television or in real life that is similar to this text?
- What have you learnt before that links to what we have read so far?
- If you were (name character) how would you feel about ...?
- What do you imagine (name character) to look and act like? Why?

Questions to ask after reading:

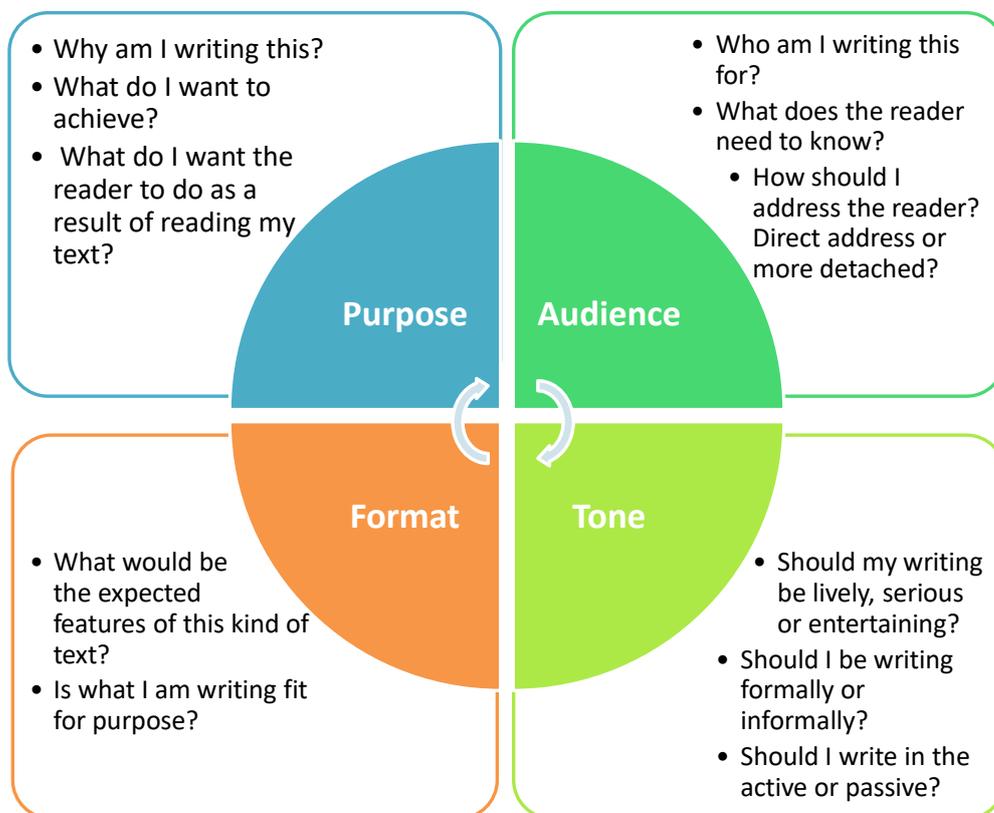
- In your own words, what were the main ideas in this text?
- What do you think is the most interesting part of what we have read? Why?
- If you were going to tell a friend about this text, what would you say?
- How could the writer have made this text more interesting?
- How does the layout and organisation of this text help you to understand the main ideas?
- Why do you think the writer chose to write about this topic?
- What was the effect of ... in the text? (Word, punctuation, character, event)
- If you had to remove one part of the text, which part would you choose?
- What was your favourite part? Why?
- Would you like to read more about this topic? Why/why not?

How can I help my child with writing?

Writing is not just about putting pen to paper; in fact, if you provide a writing task and tell a child to just get on with it, most children will struggle to produce something that really reflects their true ability and skill set. Yes, some children are 'natural writers' but this is unusual—you are far more likely to see better results if your child dedicates time, ***prior to putting pen to paper***, really considering and deciding on the following things:

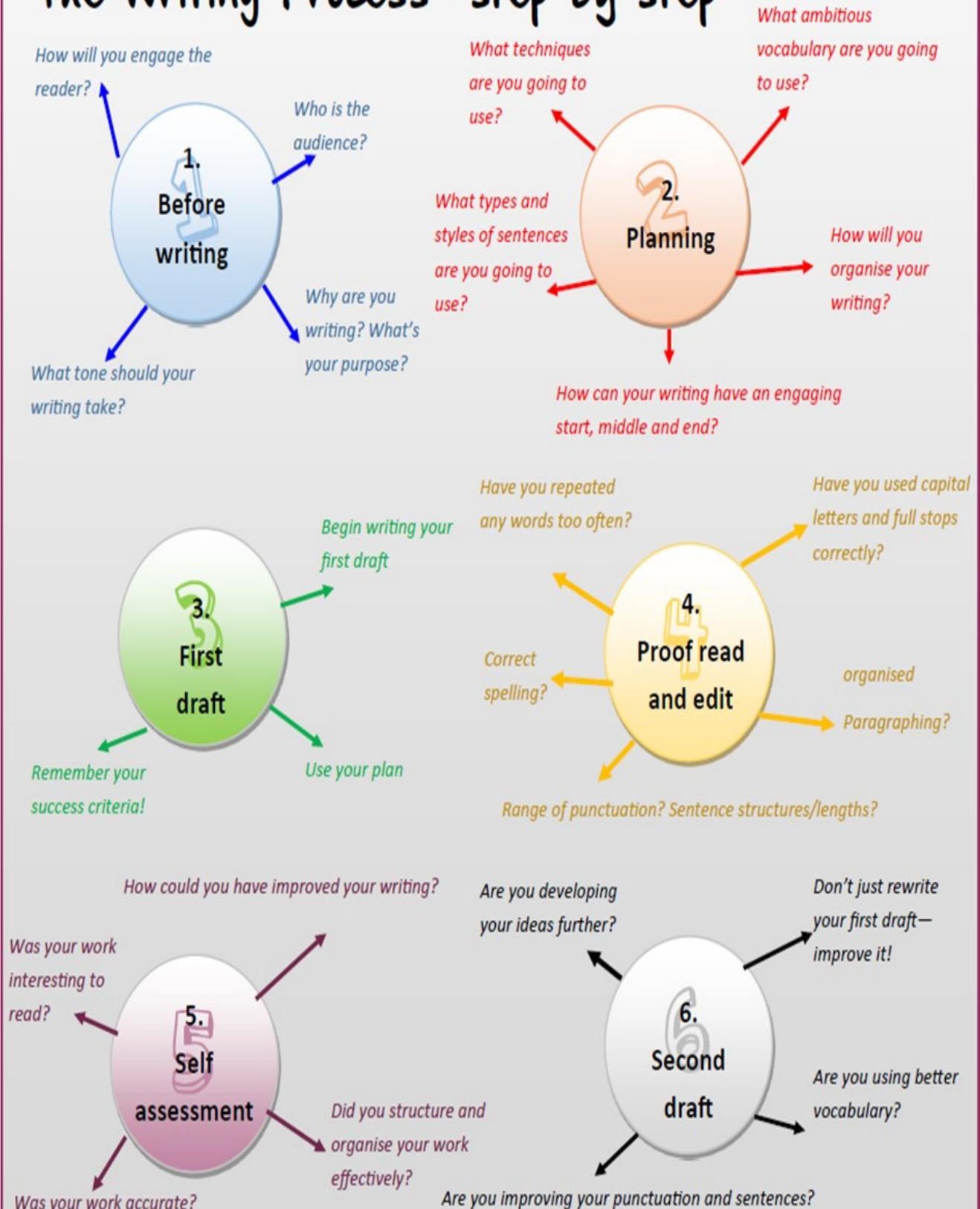
1. What am I trying to achieve with my writing—***purpose***?
2. Who am I writing for—***audience***?
3. How should I structure/organise my work—***format***?
4. What kinds of words and style should I use—***tone***?

In school, your child will often plan their writing using the grid below before they ever embark on actually producing the piece of writing.



How to get writing...

The Writing Process— step by step



Useful Websites to Promote Written Accuracy

BBC Bitesize Sentence Types:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/topics/zkxxsbk/articles/zvp6dp3>

BBC Bitesize Paragraphs:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/topics/zwwp8mn/articles/zv4j7nb>

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/topics/z4hrt39/articles/z2mj8hv>

BBC Bitesize Purpose and Audience:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/guides/zqx8hv4/revision/1>

BBC Bitesize Vocabulary:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/guides/zc4sk7h/revision/1>

Ideas to Get Writing

Write a set of instructions for building a den/a campfire/a treehouse.

Write a letter to your local council arguing for public libraries to be kept open or to be closed and repurposed.

Write a description of a fairground during the summer holidays.

Write a review of the book/film you have most recently read/watched.

Write a story that begins with the words:
And then the lights went out...

Useful Links and Websites

<https://literacytrust.org.uk/>

This is the website for the National Literacy Trust which supports the development of literacy skills from birth through to adulthood. There is a dedicated parents' section where you can find suggestions for activities to do with your child. This can be accessed here: <https://wordsforlife.org.uk/>

<https://www.literacyshed.com/>

This is the website for Literacy Shed where you can find a wealth of visual literacy activities and resources to engage children. Although the website is aimed at primary aged children, there are many resources that are suitable for 11-13 year olds.

