

Phonics at Home

In your packs you have a guide to early reading, 2 sets of phase 2 (single letter sounds) or phase 3 (unusual single letter sounds, 2 or 3 letter sounds) flash cards as well as one set of 'tricky words' which the children have to learn at each of these stages. There is also a guide to letter formation for when your children want to practise their handwriting - or write you a special message! It is important for letters to start in the correct place and to be formed properly now, so that when your children are older and begin to join, they are able to do so easily, without having to relearn how the letter is formed.

The 'Tricky words' are those which cannot be sounded out, rather just have to be learned by sight and rote.

GAMES TO PLAY

WHAT'S MY SOUND/TRICKY WORD?

Using 1 pack of flash cards, or set of tricky words, shuffle then show 1 card at a time to your child. They have to shout out the sound, if they get it right, they keep the card, if not you do. The winner is the person with the most cards at the end.

PAIRS

Place both sets of letter sounds face down on the table. Take it in turns to turn up two cards. Each time you find a pair you keep that pair in your hand. If you do not find a pair you need to make sure your partner has seen the cards and replace them in exactly the

same place, face down for the next player. The winner is the person who has found the most pairs.

SNAP

Shuffle the cards, deal out equally to each player. Each player puts down 1 card at a time. When someone turns over a card that matches the card on top of another player's face up pile, the players race to be the first to say "**Snap!**" The player who says "**Snap!**" first wins both piles and adds them to the bottom of their face down pile.

KIMS GAME

Put a selection of flashcards (max 8) on a tray. Ask your child to look carefully at them for about thirty seconds. Then take the tray away and ask them to call out what they remember. Another way of playing the game is to cover the sounds, take one sound away and ask the child to spot what is missing.

HOW MANY?

Shuffle a set of flashcards. Place face down and turn over the top one. How many times can your child write that sound/write a word with that sound in, in 1 minute. Check for correct letter formation and finger spaces between the sounds/words - I am very strict!

STRATEGIES FOR READING

Children can use a variety of strategies to help them read. Sounding out a word using phonics is only one of them. Other strategies that your child will use will be looking at the picture for picture clues, using the initial sound to 'guess' the correct word, breaking down the word by covering parts of it up into manageable chunks and reading

the rest of the sentence to get a 'sense' of the word. All of these strategies are equally valuable and should be encouraged. Some children are visual learners and find it easier to learn the shape of the word - eg c- a - t has two letters the same height with a final tall letter, but d-o-g has an initial tall letter and a final letter that 'digs under the ground'.

See *Helping your Children to Read* for more information.

EMERGENT WRITING

Some children love to write from the first moment they hold a pencil. Others will avoid contact with paper and pens at all costs! Both of these behaviours are completely usual. As teachers our role is to facilitate writing at every opportunity for both these sorts of writers.

PROGRESS

Children will begin their writing journey by simply making marks on the paper - gradually they will begin to tell you what those marks make as in their minds they have 'written' down some sort of information.

As they become more confident with letter formation and sounds they will be able to use these in their mark making. For example they may be able to write the initial sound of a word or even the first part (although they may not finish it), so you may find a string of letters that make complete sense to your child, but is difficult for you to decipher.

The next stage is to write familiar words or phrases and to repeat them over again - eg I went to the shop, I went to the park, I went to the farm.

Gradually as confidence builds, they will enjoy sounding out the whole word or enlarging on the repeated information until they are able to write a simple sentence or even a story.

HOW TO HELP WITH WRITING

Showing your child that you use writing in everyday life is the best way to model writing. Take every opportunity to write in front of your child and 'voice' how your brain works eg 'I wonder how you spell cat? Oh I know I can sound it out c-a-t, cat!'

You might encourage your child to write in the following ways:

Writing a shopping list

Labelling a drawing or a picture

Writing a caption for their picture

Taking a message

Make some signs for their castle, train track, road etc

Write some instructions for making a model/cake

Writing a letter to someone special

Making up a 'silly sentence' where each word starts with the same letter or has the same sound in

Writing a story for another child

DON'T MAKE IT A CHORE!

As I said, many children are reluctant writers - they just need to see us as adults showing them how we write and to understand that it can be quite fun! Celebrate all their efforts!