



# Learning to Write at Waterbeach Community Primary School



## Aims

- To share how writing is taught.
- To develop parents' confidence in helping their children with writing
- To discuss the importance of fine and gross motor skills and postural strength
- To outline the different stages in writing development
- To show examples of activities and resources we use to teach and support writing development
- Remind parents that it is okay to ask questions and for advice!



## What we would expect by the end of the Reception year

- Write recognisable letters, most of which are correctly formed
- Spell words by identifying sounds in them and representing the sounds with a letter or letters
- Write simple phrases and sentences that can be read by others. **(and themselves)**

## What we would expect by the end of Year 1

- Write sentences by saying out loud what they are going to write about. *I can write sentences by saying out loud what I am going to write about.*
- Write sentences by composing a sentence orally before writing it. *I can say my sentence out loud before I write it.*
- Write sentences by sequencing sentences to form short narratives. *I can join my sentences together to make a story.*
- Write sentences by re-reading what he/she has written to check that it makes sense. *I can read my sentence and check that it makes sense.*
- Discuss what they have written with the teacher or other pupils. *I can talk about my writing with my teacher or children in my class.*
- Read aloud their writing clearly enough to be heard by their peers and the teacher. *I can read my sentence out loud so that children in my class can hear and understand me*



More than anything we want our children to see themselves as writers

**We want children to be able to write for a variety of purposes:**

- **Functional writing: lists, letters, signs etc.**
- **Imaginative writing - stories, poems and songs etc.**

We want children to become imaginative storytellers and eventually - maybe not in Reception or Year 1, but as they progress through the school - imaginative story writers.

This is where imaginative play and sharing stories are invaluable. Children can't write stories if they don't hear stories. The more stories that children hear, then the more story book language they absorb - especially from traditional tales - phrases such as "once upon a time", "happily ever after" and expressions such as "burst into tears" instead of just "cried".

Through hearing lots of stories, children become aware of the different kinds of characters that you meet in a story, and of the kinds of adventures and misadventure that characters have. Children soak up this knowledge and use the words and ideas that they've heard in stories, as well as their own personal experiences, when they begin to create stories themselves.



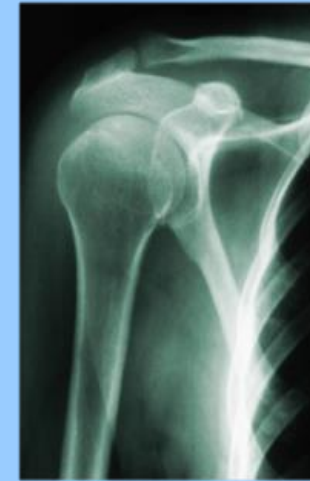
## Elements of Early Writing

1. Upper body development
2. Fine motor development
3. Phonics
4. Stages of writing development
5. Talking for writing



# 1.Upper Body Development

Physical development in the upper and mid body



Postural control refers to the ability to maintain an upright position. This is an important skill needed for developing fine motor skills. Without good postural control, a child may have difficulty maintaining an upright sitting posture and may fatigue easily when sitting at a desk in school. Plus using the hands well will be difficult. When postural control is adequate, the hands may be used effectively for working on table top tasks, such as writing and cutting with scissors. For the hands to work well, strength, stability and mobility are necessary in the shoulders and forearms. So, in addition to the shoulders being strong, wrist stability is an important component for having precise finger control.



# 1.Upper Body Development

## Ways to develop shoulder strength and stability

- Playing while laying on the tummy is a great way to develop shoulder strength and stability. Try reading, writing, colouring, working on puzzles, playing with toys or anything, while laying on the tummy.
  - wheelbarrow walking
  - Crawl on all fours: forward, backward, sideways or change direction on command.
  - Crawl through an obstacle course
  - While in a crab walking position, kick a balloon and keep it up in the air for as long as possible.
  - snake or combat crawl (low crawl on your elbows and knees with pelvis flat) to squeeze under a low limbo stick
  - strengthen the arms by swinging on monkey bars, trapeze bar, ladders, climbing up a slide
  - Aim for the basket ball hoops with all types of balls
  - Pour water from a jug or sand from buckets
  - Draw large shapes and pictures on chalk boards or white boards with both hands simultaneously
- Etc.



# 1.Upper Body Development

## Ways to develop wrist stability

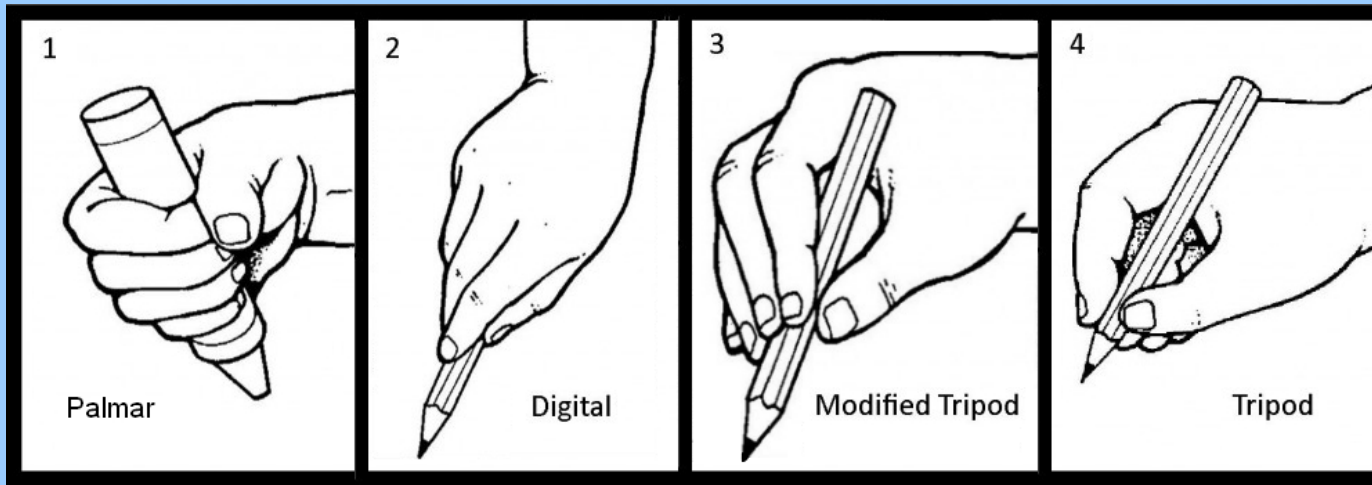
- Walk or race while balancing a tennis ball on a large spoon; don't let it fall!
- Play with a Yo-Yo
- Putting weight into the arms and hands by walking like animals; Gorilla crouch walking, Bear walking, Inchworm walking, Snake crawling, Bird walking, Crab walking.
- When sitting on the floor to play, lean into one hand and keep the hand open; Reach across your body with the other hand to play. This is a good position for drawing in the garden with chalk, doing a floor puzzle, playing with blocks, lego and other small toys.
- Practice opening jars of all sizes
- Pour water from a pitcher into several cups
- To keep the wrists straight while colouring, drawing and writing, use a slanted or vertical surface such as an easel. Paper can be taped to a wall as well.





## 2. Fine Motor Development

There are many different hand skills needed to be able to hold a pencil effectively. There are different stages of pencil grip children go through before gaining the tripod grip. Here are the main stages.



Lots of fine motor skill activities will develop a confident tripod pencil grip

### EYFS Goals

- Hold a pencil effectively in preparation for fluent writing – using the tripod grip in almost all cases
- Use a range of small tools, including scissors, paint brushes and cutlery
- Begin to show accuracy and care when drawing.

### Year 1 Goals

- Sit correctly at a table, holding a pencil comfortably and correctly.
- Begin to form lower-case letters in the correct direction, starting and finishing in the right place.
- Form capital letters.
- Form digits 0-9.
- Understand which letters belong to which handwriting 'families' (i.e. letters that are formed in similar ways) and practise these.



An x ray of a developed hand (around the age of 7) on the left compared to an EYFS age child's hand on the right.



- Let's shift the position. Easels, paper on walls, chalk on the floor. Shifting a child to standing or squatting to write provides them more pelvic stability and therefore more shoulder stability which in turn enables hand function to be more fluid.
- We recommend using pencil grips, round paint brushes, very large chunky chinks, finger painting which will all work on the dynamic wrist stability and finger isolation (controlling fingers separately) which a child needs to write later in life.
- Games that encourage visual skills and hand/eye coordination such as catching bubbles, balloon keepy-uppy, walking a line, eye spy (colour and shape), follow the leader.
- Activities that involve crossing the midline and bilateral integration: crawling, climbing, using the two sides of the body in opposition (two different directions).



## Ways to develop fine motor control

**Playdough** - pinching, squeezing, with thumb and forefinger, poking, rolling to make a snake

**Threading** - beads, pasta straws. Make necklaces

**Picking up small objects** - using the thumb and index finger, learning to use tweezers and pipettes or small eye droppers. Count dried peas into a pot or post pennies into a money box or use inset puzzles.

**Finger rhymes** - stretching and curling fingers, moving them independently

**Water play** - using spray toys and spray bottles. Water the flowers, spray the path or windows

**Craft activities** - glue sticks and paint brushes. Making collages with paper, decorating with sequins.

**Icing cakes** - using a plastic dispenser to push and squeeze out the icing.

**Strengthening activities** - swinging from a climbing frame, grasping to climb, crawling through tunnels.

**Stirring cake mixtures** - using a two handed operation, one to hold the bowl the other to stir. Encourage anti-clockwise rotation

**Making powder paint and blending colours** - as with mixing a cake.



## Handwriting

We model how to form letters correctly, so that children can eventually acquire a fluent and legible handwriting style. These skills develop over a long period of time.

Letter Formation – refer to Reading Diary and Sparkle marks for correct letter formation

### Examples of ways to practise correct letter formation

- Draw the letter with chalk on the pavement/in the garden
- Shape playdough into the letter shape
- Draw with a paintbrush of water on the garden path
- Paint the different letters with your favourite colour
- Draw on the tiles with soap suds/bubbles in the bath
- Make a letter maze with playdough and a marble
- Create the letter shape using arts and crafts
- Write the letter on a blackboard to make disappear with a paintbrush and water
- Write them in sand, salt, glitter or shaving foam trays
- Use a paint programme on an ipad

**Handwriting**  
**awards in school**

- **Bronze**
- **Silver**
- **Gold**



## Handwriting awards in school

- Bronze
- Silver
- Gold
- Platinum

Handwriting Progression and Awards		
Bronze	Consistently, correctly forming all printed letters.  abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ	Foundation Stage – Year 1
Silver	Consistently, correctly forming all pre-cursive letters.  abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz w x y z ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ UVWXYZ	Year 1 – Year 2
Gold	Correctly forming and joining all cursive letters.	End of Year 2
Platinum (Pen Licence)	Consistently and correctly formed, legible and correctly joined.	Key Stage 2 (Year 3 – 6)  The vast majority of children from Year 5 should be using pen.



### 3. Phonics

An early phonics focus lays the groundwork for systematic phonics that is taught in schools. These are the sorts of things every child has been exposed to since the day they were born!

These include:

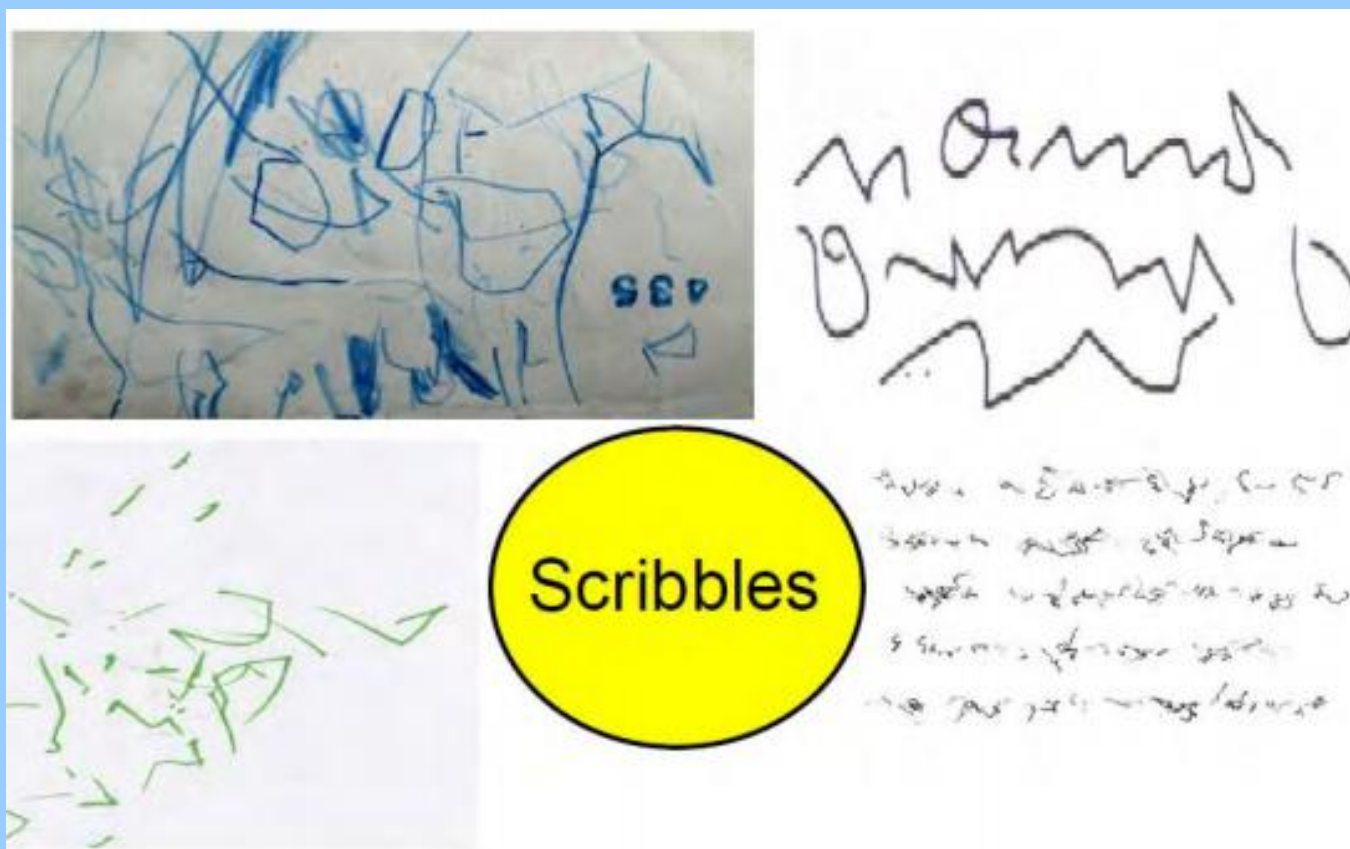
- Listening for sounds in the environment
- Playing with musical instruments
- Making percussion noises with our bodies
- Playing with rhythm and rhyme
- Finding words beginning with the same sounds (alliteration)
- Experimenting with voice sounds
- Orally starting to break words down into sounds and using sounds to make simple words (blending and segmenting)

*Refer to phonics workshop power point on our website for more information about phonics in school.*





## 4. Stages of writing development





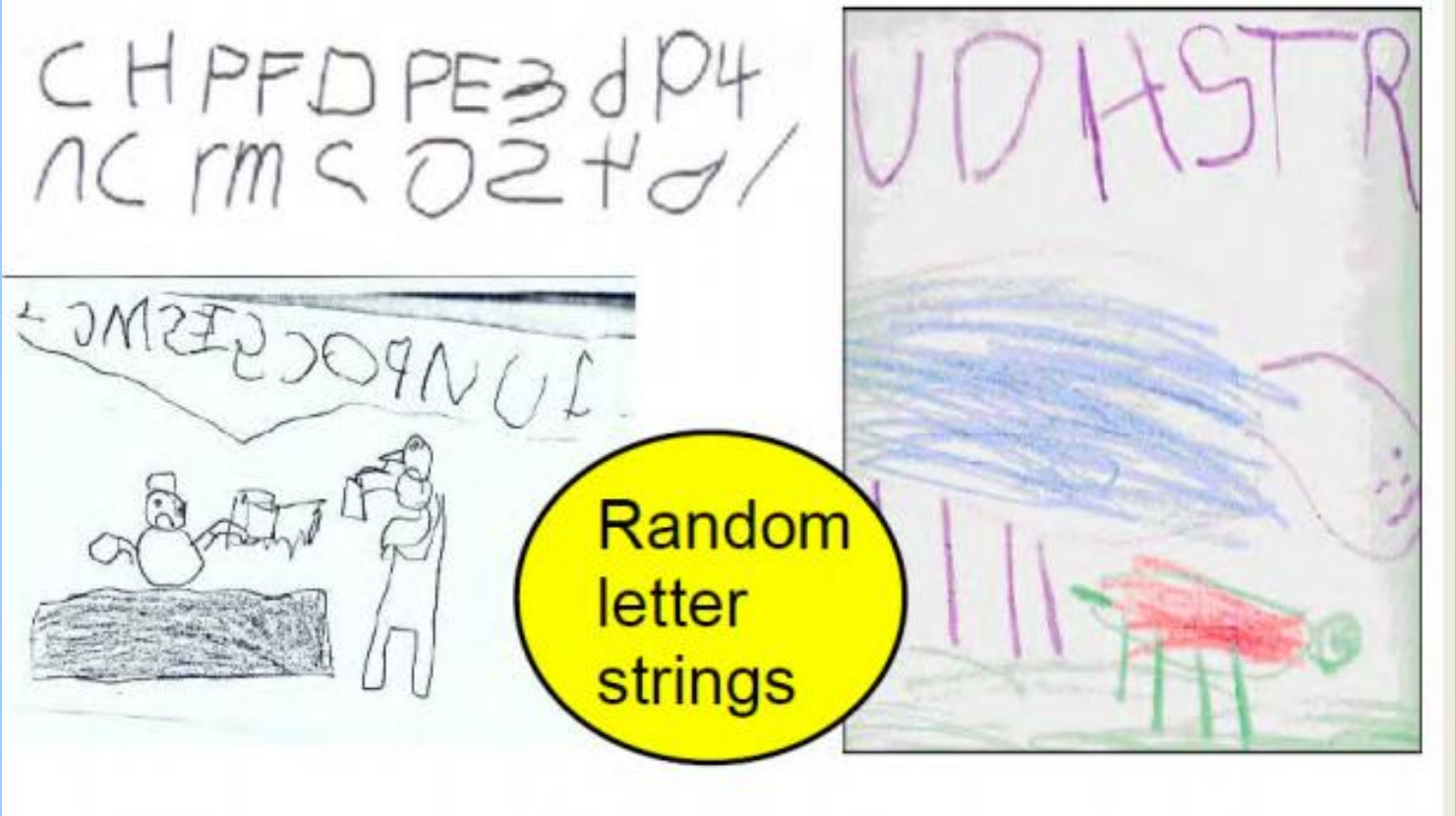
## 4. Stages of writing development

The top left of the complex block shows two rows of handwritten letter-like forms on a white background. The first row contains 'b d C Z o b o b' and the second row contains 'w c c ' o z m'. To the right of this is a drawing of a race car in blue and red, with the text 'I played with my race car.' written in blue ink. Below the letter-like forms is a yellow circle with the text 'Letter-like forms' in black. To the right of the yellow circle is a drawing of three orange, irregular shapes on a white background, resembling stylized letters or figures.





## 4. Stages of writing development





## 4. Stages of writing development



"Pinched"  
key words

own name mummy daddy love from to happy birthday I



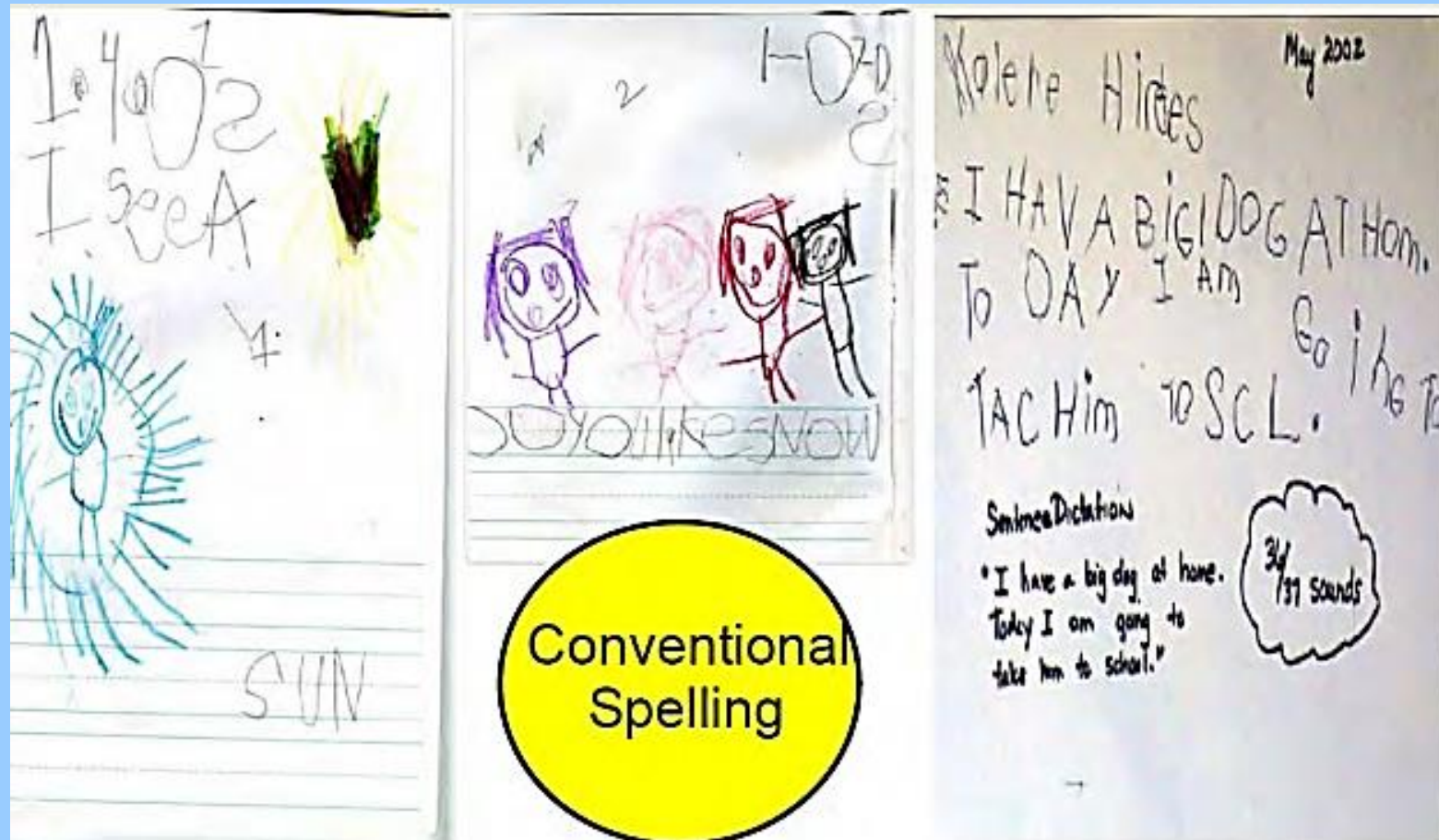
# 4. Stages of writing development







## 4. Stages of writing development





## 5. Talking for writing

“In order to become a writer, children must develop **transcriptional** skills of handwriting, spelling and punctuation; but they must **first** develop **compositional** skills by finding a creative and expressive voice of their own which they can communicate using the transcriptional skills of writing”

*Julie Cigman Early Years consultant, trainer and writer*



## 5. Talking for writing

Examples of talking for writing;

- Action Stories
- Story maps
- Talking about something they have made
- Fred Talk
- Recording our sentences and listening to them before writing
- Saying the items needed for a list
- Talking through events that they have taken part in
- Role-playing a story
- Singing a song/rhyme



## 5. Talking for writing

Some children love to copy our writing and will ask us to write their sentence for them to copy. It is great that they want to write but is there a better way?

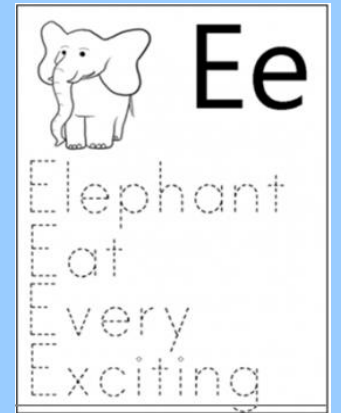
### How effective is copywriting or overwriting?

Think about it...

Do children get the message that writing is something you can do but they can't?

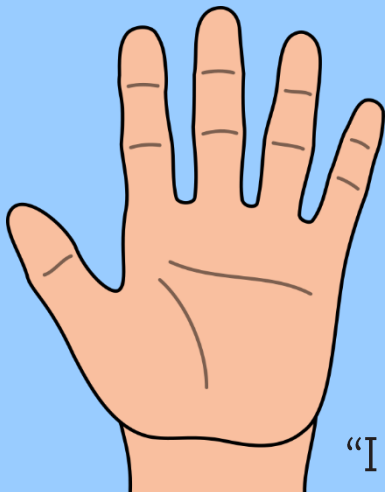
Does copywriting support children's development of phonics skills which are essential for real independent writing?

At the end of copywriting, children often have no idea what they have written – this is very different in emergent writing where **WE** have no idea what they have written but **THEY** do!





## 5. Talking for writing



Fred Frog can only sound talk. He helps us to sound out each word before we write it.



“I can sound talk each word before I write it.”

We encourage children to say their whole sentence or caption out loud before they begin writing it. This helps them remember what word to write next.

“I can say what I want to write out loud before I write it.”







# Why is Phonics still important for adults?

Reading brand new words in novels. How would you read these words?

**ephemeron**

**cornucopia**

**malapropism**

**pusillanimous**

**vicissitude**



# Why is Phonics still important in for adults?

Reading brand new words in novels. How would you read these words?

**ephemeron**

Something that is short-lived

**cornucopia**

a large amount or supply of something

**malapropism**

the wrong use of one word instead of another word  
because they sound similar to each other, with results  
that are unintentionally funny

**pusillanimous**

weak and cowardly (= not brave); frightened of  
taking risks

**vicissitude**

An unpleasant change in situation



How can you help your child?

# Writing Superheroes

ELG  
Expectations



I can say what I want to write out loud before  
I write it.



I can sound talk each word before I write it.



I can hold a pencil comfortably.  
I can form recognisable letters.  
I can form letters correctly.



I can write independently.



I can put finger spaces between my words.



I can use full stops at the end of sentences.



I can read my sentence and check that it makes sense.  
I can read my sentence to an adult or another child.



How can you help your child?

# Writing Superheroes

Year 1  
Expectations



I can use capital letters at the start of a sentence.



I can use joining words like 'and'.



I can spell words containing each of the letter sounds I have been taught.  
I can spell high frequency words correctly.



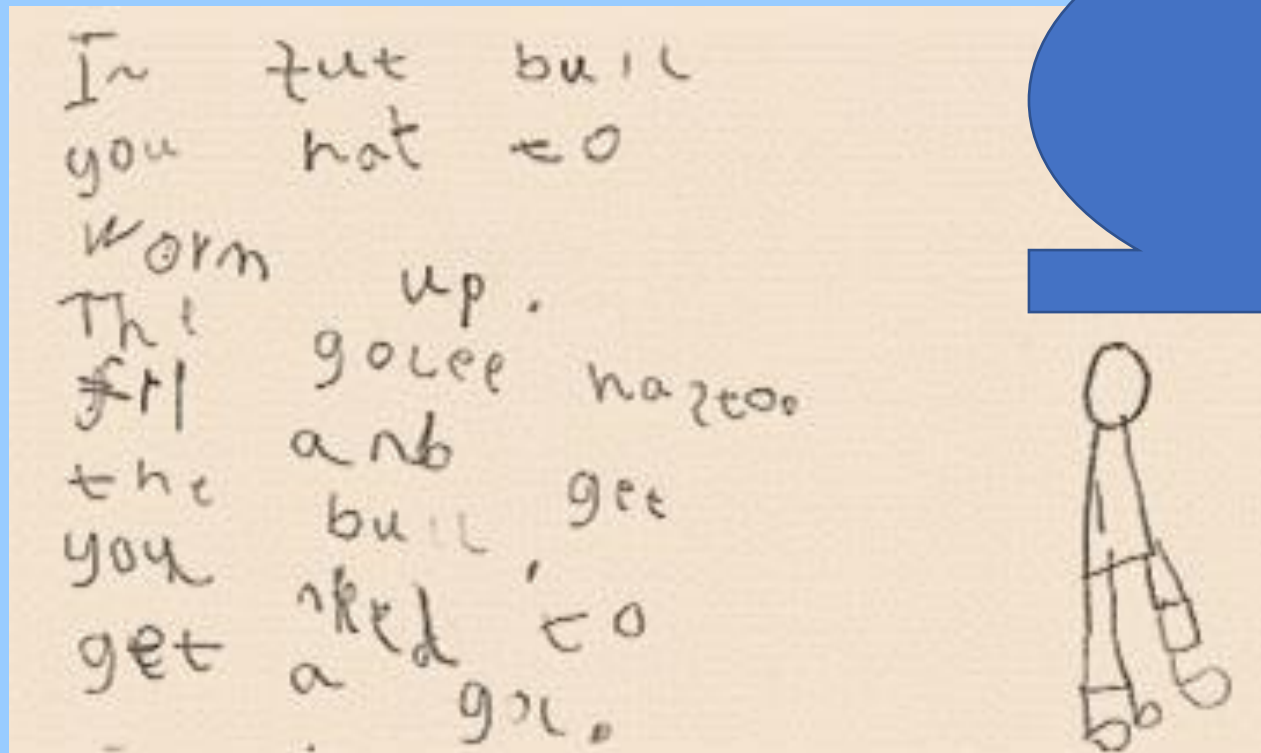
I can join my sentences together to make a story.



My writing is interesting.



Guidance From 'Early years foundation stage profile: exemplification materials'  
Can you read them?





Guidance From 'Early years foundation stage profile: exemplification materials'  
Can you read them?



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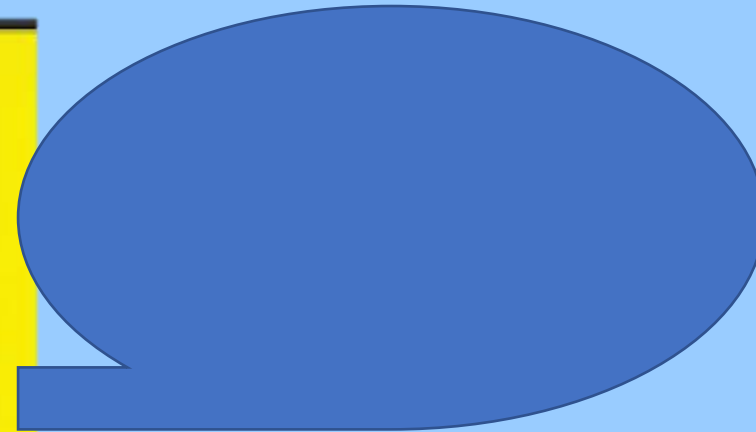
Amy worked with  
Amelie to make this  
picture. She drew +  
then Amelie wrote  
the sentence. They  
talked about it as  
she wrote.



Guidance From 'Early years foundation stage profile: exemplification materials'  
Can you read them?

I haf mayd his sumreeyn  
it is speshe

dot- EVCH!





Guidance From 'Early years foundation stage profile: exemplification materials'

Can you read them?

I got a sgab from the wot slides  
and went to the kat van with  
my bruv and my mom and dad  
and harree and gran dad. and  
my cugung kugm.

Waterbeach Community Primary School  
EYFS Writing Café January 2021

Waterbeach Community Primary School  
Parents Writing Workshop Spring 2023





Writing can be:

- Captions
- Labels
- Lists
- Stories
- Facts
- Recounts
- Instructions
- ...





## Understanding how to write a sentence – food for thought

There are many skills involved that we take for granted because we have been doing it for so long.

But for the children it's all new, and there's a lot to learn:

- Deciding what I want to say before I begin to write
- Where to start writing?
- Remember what first word was
- listen for sounds in the word, is it a word I already know?
- Leave a space before I begin to write the next word, otherwise it will look like one big long word and nobody will be able to read it
- Say the sentence again - remember what I've already written, decide what is the next word is, listen for the sounds again
- Where to go when you reach the end of the line
- Read the whole sentence. Did it make sense? Did I miss any words out? Put a full stop at the end.



How can you help your child?

Use the phoneme (sound) mats to help your child write.

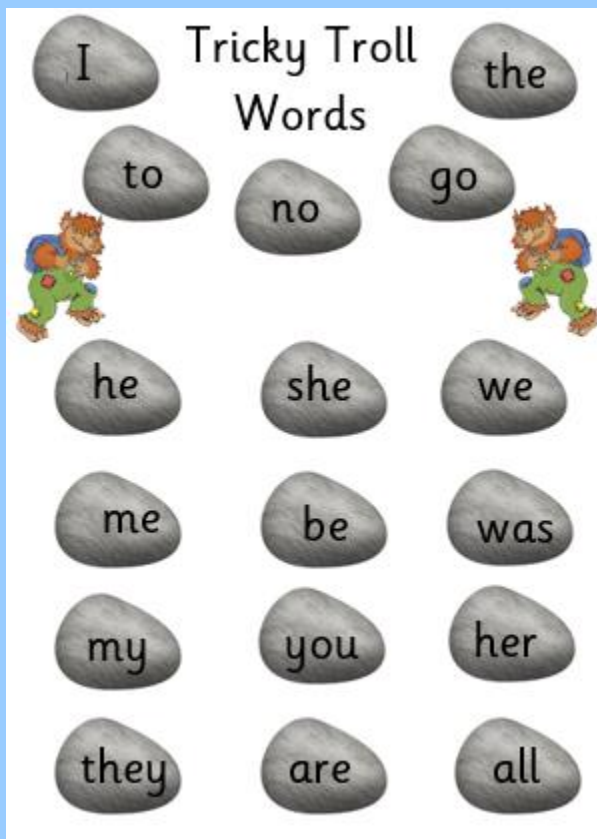


Correct spellings are not essential at the moment but words should be phonetically plausible. **We want to build your child's confidence in writing first!**





How can you help your child?



Use the sound mats to help your child write.

However, these Tricky Troll words do need to be spelt correctly.



## How can you help your child? – Our top tips!

- Be positive and praise them for their efforts
- Practise lots of phonics orally. This could include daily sound practise using their phonics garden, blending and segmenting words
- Model using the 'Sentence Superheroes' when you are writing
- Ensure your child has access to mark making tools at all times so that they can practise when they would like to (pens, paper, chalk, paint etc.)
- Have sound and word mats to hand to support your child as they write
- Complete activities which will help develop gross and fine motor skills which will support writing
- Start small to build confidence
- Continue to read a range of books/texts with your child. This will expose them to lots of lovely language, vocabulary, characters, stories and give them lots of ideas.



# Questions

If you have any queries, please email your child's class teacher.

We are here to help!