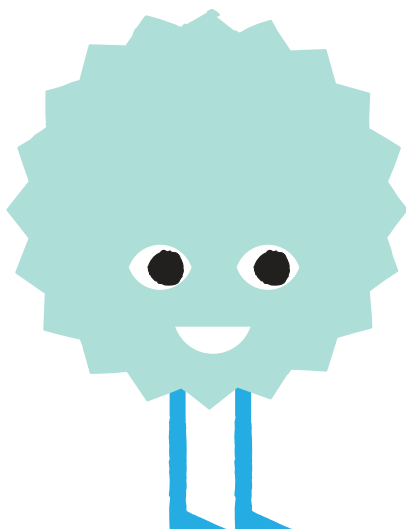
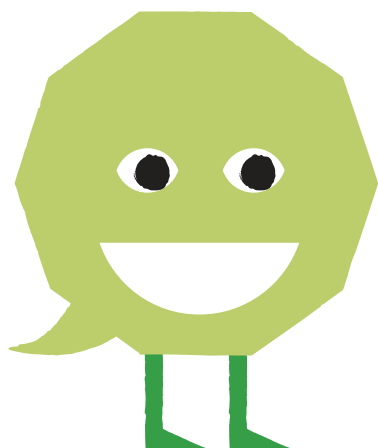
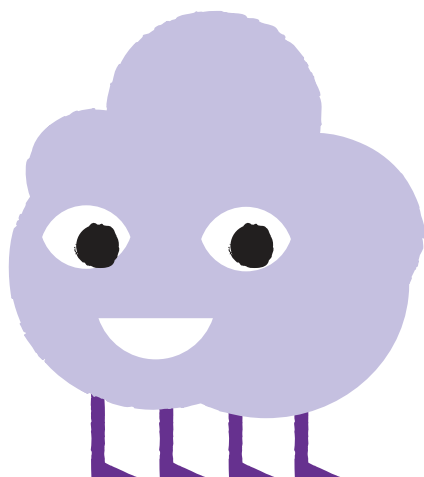
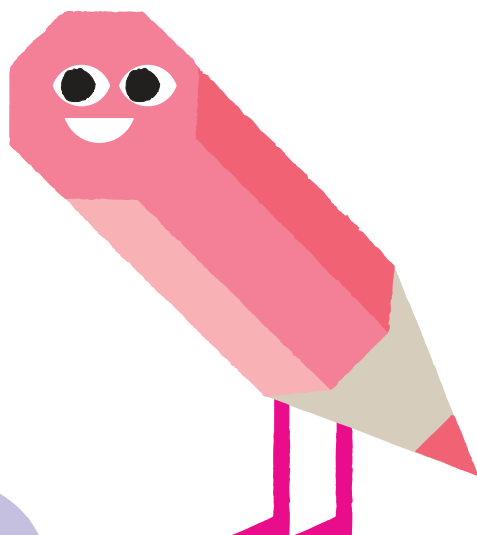


At Home with Family Learning



Fun and useful ways to
improve reading, writing
and maths skills for all



NALA

National Adult Literacy Agency
Áisíneacht Náisiúnta Litearthachta do Aosaigh

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Written by Margaret Keating. At Home with Family Learning 2020 is a revised edition of a booklet of the same name first published in 2005 and revised in 2009.

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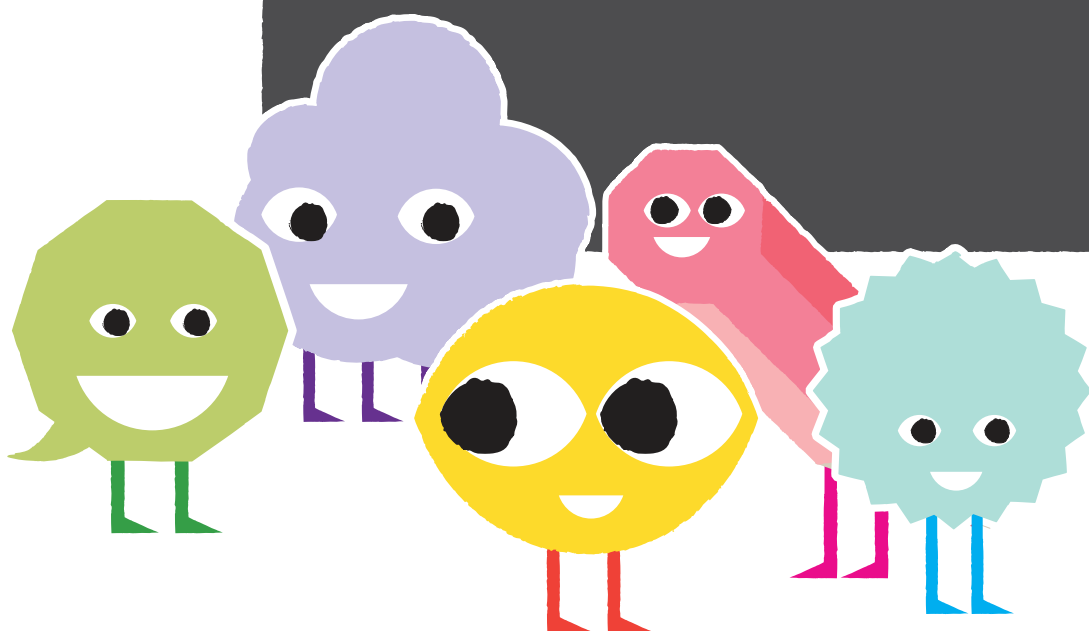
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Introduction



As a parent, you are your child's first teacher. Your home is a place where lots of learning is happening every day. This booklet tells you how to make the most of your home as a place where your family can enjoy learning together.



We learn through our senses by seeing, hearing and doing. Young children learn by playing and by copying things they see you doing and saying. You can support your child's learning by helping them find the way they learn best.

By the time children go to school, they have learned:

- to listen and understand what is being said,
- to concentrate on things that interest them,
- to move around in their environment,
- about numbers and how things work,
- how to get along with other people, and
- lots and lots of other things!

Chapters start with questions about learning and are divided into three sections.

- **Babies and toddlers**
- **Pre-schoolers**
- **Young school children**

Each section lists fun, easily-managed games or activities to do in and around the home.

The chapters finish with a Quick Quiz literacy activity. You can do this with a child who has some reading skills. It acts as a summary of the chapter.

Sounds and rhymes

Here are some questions for you to think about as you read this chapter.

How do children learn to talk?

What can I do if I don't know any nursery rhymes?

How can I help my child to become aware of sounds?

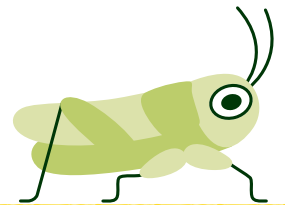




For babies and toddlers

Babies learn to talk by hearing other people talking.

- Talk naturally to them about what you are doing.
- Have them nearby when you are talking to other adults so that they can listen.
- Repeat sounds they make by themselves and turn them into a game.
- Turn sounds into words. For example, say “bang, bang” if they are banging.
- Name sounds you hear. For example, if you both hear a car engine, say “That’s a car”.
- Sing a lullaby. Even just “la, la, la” will do.
- Listen to different kinds of music together.
- When they use a word, add another one. If they say “cat”, say “nice cat”.
- Listen together and name the sounds you hear around you.



TWEET TWEET

TIG TOCK

Sounds around us

Here are some examples:

Indoors:

- Tap running
- Radio and TV
- Baby crying
- Fridge or washing machine

Outdoors:

- Plane overhead
- Car, bus or train
- Wind in the trees
- Someone calling
- Birds or insects

VROOM

For pre-schoolers



Children get better at using words when they have something to say to people they want to talk to.

- Play "I hear with my little ear something that goes 'woof'" (or 'miaow').
- Say an alphabet sound, ask the child to find something that starts with that sound
 - b for ball or balloon
 - s for sock
 - d for doll
- Make up rhymes or songs about everyday activities that your child is doing.
- Say action rhymes and do finger plays with your child.
- Sing or read nursery rhymes.
- Make up same sound sentences for your child to say.

"Lucy learned to leapfrog
in the leaves".

You could also:

- say words that rhyme with your child's own name,
- listen out for rhymes in TV adverts,
- make a tape for children to match sounds to pictures, or
- make sound patterns with words.

For example, clap or stamp to a name
— 1 clap for Ann, 2 claps for
Sim-on, 3 claps for Jess-i-ca.



Everyday rhymes

Here are some examples of made-up everyday rhymes:

"One, two, three, four, who is knocking on the door?"

"Are you able, to set the table?"

"Don't be slow, it's time to go!"

Hats and coats on, now you know!"

Action rhymes

Here are two examples of popular action rhymes.

Incy Wincy spider
went up the water spout
Down came the rain
And washed poor Wincy out
Out came the sunshine
dried up all the rain
So Incy Wincy spider
went up the spout again
I'm a little teapot

short and stout

Here's my handle

and here's my spout

When the tea is ready

hear me shout

Pick me up and pour me out!

Nursery rhymes

Here are some examples of nursery rhymes:

Humpty Dumpty sat on the wall

Humpty Dumpty had a great fall

All the King's horses

and all the King's men

Couldn't put Humpty together again

Little Miss Muffet

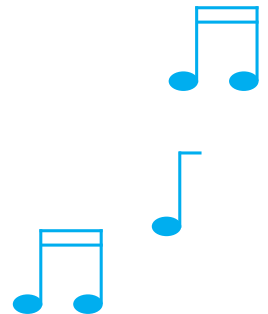
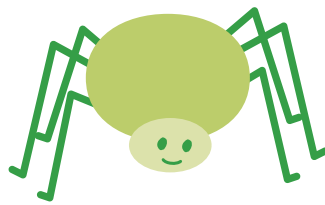
Sat on a tuffet

Eating her curds and whey

Down came a spider

Who sat down beside her

And frightened Miss Muffet away.



TIPS

For young school children

Children improve their learning and reading by listening and speaking.

- Some children prefer listening as a way of learning. Allow your child to say the letters out loud when learning to spell.
- Ask your child questions that need more than a Yes/No answer such as, "How do you feel about that?"
- Help your child make their own recording for you to guess the sounds, for example door shutting or brushing teeth.
- Ask the child to 'teach' you something they have learned.
- Let them describe events that happened during the day at school.
- Call out a list of directions, for example, "Go upstairs, find your bag and bring it to me."
- To help your child put ideas in the right order, let them retell a story they have heard.
- Encourage them to give opinions and to ask questions.
- Help your child make decisions by discussing their ideas.
- If they use a wrong word when talking, say the right one when you are talking, rather than correct them. For example, if a child says, "I goed to the shop", you would say "Oh, you went to the shop."



Quick Quiz

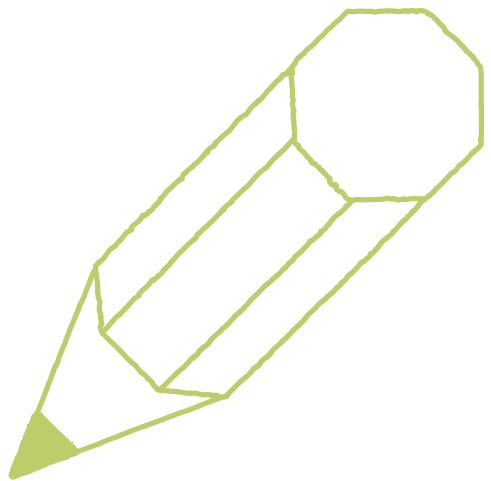
This quiz can be done with a child who has some reading skills. You need to finish the missing words. They can be found in the chapter above.

Talk about what you are d_____.

Get children to notice s_____.

Use r_____ in songs and play.

Listening is a way of l_____.



Answers: doing, sounds, rhymes, learning

Stories and books

Here are some questions you may have about learning to read.

What is a good book?

How do stories help reading?

Does TV stop children becoming good readers?



For babies and toddlers



Sharing stories and books at an early stage helps reading later on.

- Stories are not just found in books.
Tell your child short, simple stories you know.
- Make up a story using your child's favorite toys.
- Make your own picture books with pictures of your child's favourite things cut from old magazines.
- Share books by looking at and talking about the pictures. Name something and ask your child to find it in the pictures.
- Find time to sit together and share books sometime during the day; five minutes can be enough.
- Choose a variety of books, especially ones that look fun. Libraries are a good place to try out lots of different kinds of books, without any pressure to buy.
- Show your child how to use books—how to hold them the right way up, go from left to right across the page and go from the front to the back of the book.
- Give your child old catalogues or magazines to practise turning pages.
- Run your finger under the words occasionally so your child's eyes get used to going from left to right across the page.

Types of books

Here are some of the types of books available.

- cloth books
- waterproof bath books
- board books
- pop-up books
- big books
- touch and feel books
- lift-the-flap books
- homemade books
- home or toy catalogues
- picture books
- story books or storybook with a CD
- e-books you can read on a computer or phone



TIPS

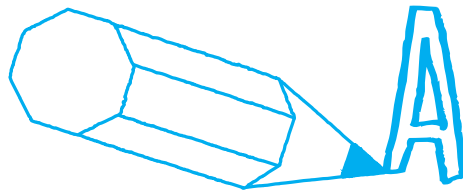
For pre-schoolers

Stories help reading, as children learn that the words you say match the words on the page.

- Tell your child 'real life' stories you know. They love hearing about themselves as a baby. Tell a story about yourself or a grandparent as a child.
- Talk about photos taken at family events. Turn them into a story.
- Make a scrapbook using old photos. Write words or short sentences under the photographs.
- Some books only have pictures, so get your child to tell the story to you.
- Encourage your child to make up their own story about their favourite toys or figures.
- Ask your child to draw their own pictures of a story.

ONCE

UPON



time

What is a good storybook?

It is one that the reader and listener find interesting.

It might be funny or entertaining. Ask yourself whether your child would enjoy it and be able to listen to it.

Are the pictures well drawn? Is it well written? Do you like it?

You may be the one reading it, over and over and over!

- Make your own 'storysack' with your child. A 'storysack' is a cloth bag filled with a story book, toys, puppets and real-life props that relate to the story. A group of parents could make them to share with friends.
- When reading a story, stop to ask the child to guess what will happen next.
- Let them retell a story that they have heard, in their own words.
- Ask their opinion about a story, for example, "What did you like best?"
- Read stories that appeal to a child's feelings. These can help them to deal with a family event, like a new baby or starting school.
- Consider taking your child to a 'storytime' at your local or mobile library. Book shops sometimes have writers reading their stories, particularly during book weeks.
- Read notices, car numbers or newspaper headlines to your child. Tell them what it says on signs in shops and on the street.
- Help your child make their own book, using old toy catalogues.

What to do with children before they learn to read

Before children learn to read they already;

- know the first letter of their name,
- know favourite food packets or shops,
- can match pictures, and
- can match shapes.

- Make an ongoing alphabet scrapbook with your child. Write a letter on each page. Look for magazine pictures of things that start with that letter sound and put the pictures in the book.
- Ask the child to find a named packet or tin in the press.
- Make simple jigsaws. Cut out a picture from a magazine, stick it on to a piece

of card and cut it into four or five pieces for your child to remake.

- Talk about the pictures and shapes in jigsaws when you are doing one together.
- Name a colour and show your child an example. Ask them to find it around the room or in a book.
- Make the letters of their name in pastry. Write their name in large letters on a piece of paper. The child can put the cooked pastry shapes on top of their name.
- When you have finished reading a story, ask them what happened first, then what happened next and how the story ended.

Television

Television has been called 'the extra storyteller'. Try to watch with your child and talk about what you have seen. Sometimes they recognise a favourite character and want to read about it. But be aware of how much TV your child watches. If children spend too much time watching TV, they don't have time for playing or reading stories.

TIPS

For young school children

Reading aloud to children shows them that you think reading is important.

- Some children learn best when looking at things—they are visual learners. If your child likes to look at words when learning to spell, ask them to close their eyes and picture the word before calling out the letters or writing them down.
- Playing 'Kim's game' is a good way of learning to remember what you have seen. Put about 10 things from around the house on a tray and ask your child to look at them for a few seconds. Then take them away and ask them to call out what they remember. Another way of playing this game is to cover the things, take one thing away and ask the child to spot what is missing. You can put out more things as they get better.
- Give your child a pen or highlighter. Name small words—a, as, it, is, and, for—and ask them to find them in an old newspaper.

Helpful homework hints

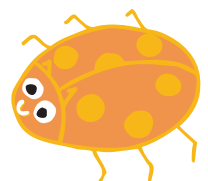
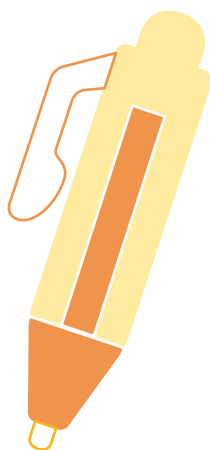
- Ask the teacher how long your child's homework should take.
- Discuss with the teacher if the child is taking too long.
- Make your child feel that homework is part of family life.
- Find out what kind of help the child needs.
- Help children to organise themselves.
- Agree a time with them that you are free to help.
- Make sure they understand what they have to do beforehand.
- Taking short breaks between subjects can help. Turn off the TV and keep calm!
- Before they get a reading book, children are sometimes given words written on small cards to learn.
- If your child gets a small card from school, write another set of words for them to match.
- Play 'snap' with the two matching sets of words.
- Put the cards around the room and call out a word for the child to find.
- Play 'go fish' or 'memory' by turning cards face down and getting the child to try and match pairs.
- You can also play this game with playing cards.
- Encourage your child to read joke books, comics and maps as their reading improves.

- Find small words in longer words—learn, them. Ask your child how many small words they can find in 'bingo', 'another' or 'television'.
- Encourage your child to read things around them—cereal packets, notices and signs in shops.
- Use magazines and newspapers to provide lots of new words and facts. Your child can use the pictures for information about the words they are reading.
- Listen to your child reading aloud in short regular sessions.



Ways of reading with children

- Paired reading can help your child's confidence. The child might choose a book (or comic) to read. At first, both of you read aloud together. When the child is ready, they carry on reading alone. If they don't know a word, you say it for them and both of you continue to read together until they are ready to read alone again. No pressure is made to get them to read by themselves. They only do it when they are ready. This is useful with older children when they find text books difficult.
- Read longer books to your child. This helps memory skills.
- Use story CDs to help your child's reading. They can listen to them or read with the CD.
- Encourage or help your child to make and write their own books, drawing their own pictures.
- Encourage your child to read for pleasure. This gives them confidence as they try to work out the meanings and sounds of words.
- Encourage your child's interest in reading about topics they enjoy—animals, music and football.
- As your child reads more difficult books, it can be helpful to use the 'before, during and after' way of reading to help them.



Teaching reading

Schools have different ways of teaching reading. In some schools, the teacher writes the words on small cards and the children learn by recognising the shape of the word. Other schools teach the sounds of the letters. Children put the sounds together to make words. Most schools use both of these ways.

- When your child asks what a word is, tell them. Later on, ask them to find it on another page.
- Letters must be in the right order to say what you mean—on/no, was/saw. Help your child practise making these words with small plastic letters.

- Ask your child if they can make 2 letter words by adding **a i o u** to the letters **f m n p s t**

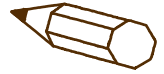
See how many words you can make:

an, a____, a____, a____

if, i____, i____

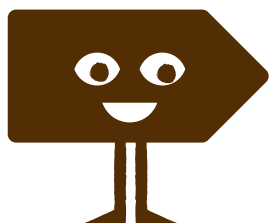
o____, o____

u____, u____



Here are some more helpful hints about reading.

- Allow an older child to practise their reading skills by reading to younger children.
- Ask the child to read a recipe or call out a list to you.
- Buy games with written instructions for your child to follow.
- Be aware that when your child becomes a confident reader, they may like to read silently.
- Books should be at a level your child can understand. The child could attempt to read the first page before buying or borrowing the book. If they do not know 10 words out of 100 in the text, your child will only understand half of what they read.
- Ask your child's school about computer programmes that help children make their own stories. This is a good way of expressing ideas if your child has difficulty with writing and drawing.



Before, during and after way of reading

Before: Look at pictures for clues and talk about word meanings.

During: Try to work out new words but keep reading.

After: Talk about what made it a good story and any parts your child found difficult.

Quick Quiz

This quiz is a literacy activity that you can do with a child who is learning to read. Small words can be found in longer ones. For example, the word 'all' can be found in the word 'small'. Can you find the following words in the four sentences below?

or, in, me, are, our, us, how, rest, read

- Tell stories of all kinds.
- Make time to share books.
- Encourage children to use the library.
- Show your own interest in reading.

Lines, patterns and shapes

Here are some questions you may have about learning to write.

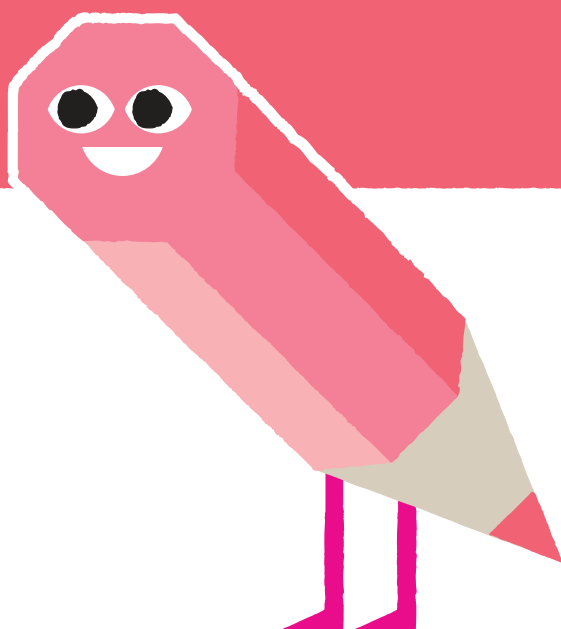
How can play activities help writing?

Should I show my child how to write letters?

Stages of writing

movement → making marks →

drawing → letters → words



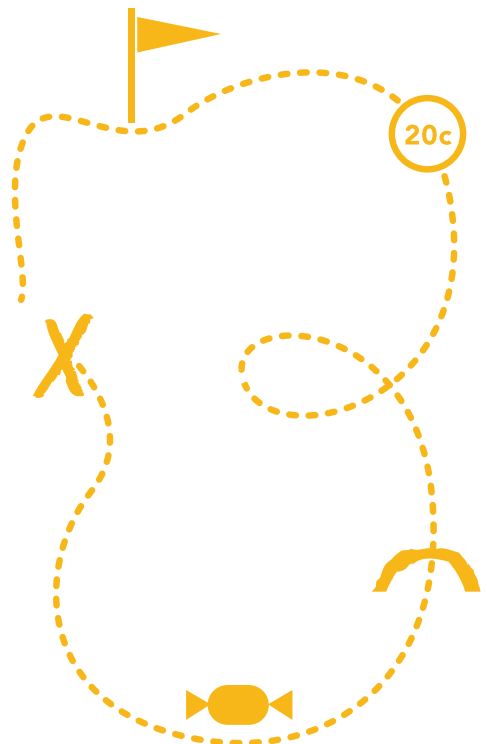
For babies and toddlers



Learning to move helps children to learn.

- Encourage your baby to reach for things—pram or mirror toys or bubbles.
- Give your baby opportunities to explore their surroundings by moving—rolling over, sitting up, crawling and walking.
- Give the child small toys to pick up and put in a box.
- Play with building blocks or large Lego®.
- Encourage your toddler to move around and pretend they are an animal
 - jumping like frogs or kangaroos,
 - stretching out one arm like an elephant's trunk, or
 - standing on one foot like a bird.

- Show your child how to draw large shapes in the air.
- Play a mirroring game where you lead and your child follows your movements, then get them to lead.
- Encourage your child to make marks by giving paper and washable markers that are easy to hold.
- Draw lines or shapes on large sheets of old newspapers, with crayons, markers or paint for your child to copy.





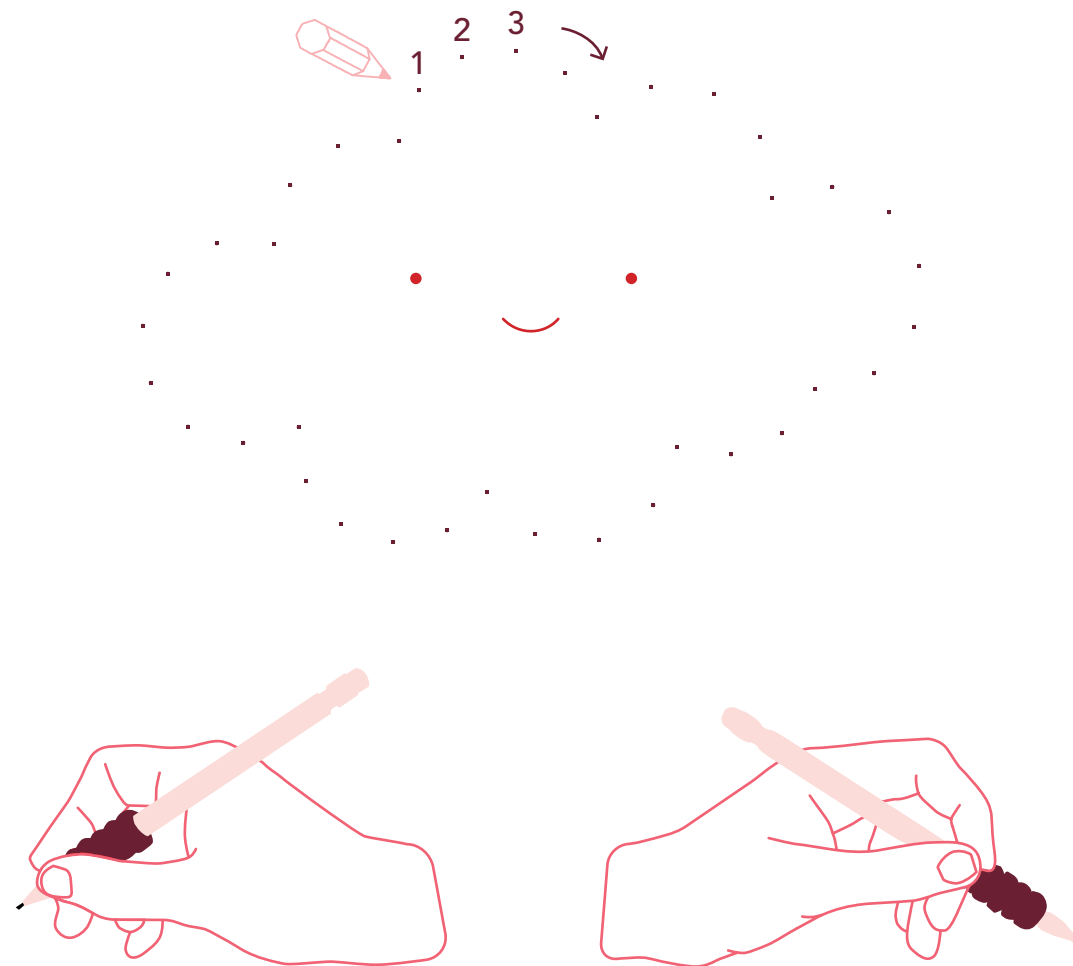
For pre-schoolers

Writing develops from the initial scribbles they enjoy doing.

- Give your child toys where they need to use their fingers and thumbs—peg boards or safety scissors, for example.
- Prepare a tray of salt or sand. Drawing on a tray of salt or sand with their finger helps your child to feel the movement of lines and shapes.
- Provide opportunities for free painting on large sheets of newspaper.
- Keep crayons and paper with toys.
- Encourage your child to use 'pretend' writing in play—writing own name, notices or price lists.
- Trace over written number and letter shapes with your hand on top of your child's.
- Ask your child to draw shapes with their eyes open and then closed.
- Make an alphabet book, with your child cutting out and sticking in pictures.
- Write words under your child's drawings for them.
- Draw on your child's back with your finger. Ask them to guess what you drew.
- Let your child see you writing—notes, lists, letters.



Holding a pencil



Right handed—lightly between thumb and first finger 2cm from the point

Left handed—slightly further back on pencil, with paper turned at an angle



A pencil grip or sticky plaster wrapped around the pencil makes it easy to hold.

TIPS

For young school children

Writing means knowing how to make the letters and numbers and being able to put what you want to say into words and sentences.

- If your child likes to learn using movement, get them to write on a table or in the air with their finger. They learn spelling best by writing the words.
- Writing goes from left to right across a page. Ask your child to draw between the lines with their finger or pencil.



- With your child, draw a line between things that go together.



- Drawing lines and shapes leads to making letter shapes. Ask your child to copy lines and shapes.



- Trace over dot-to-dot shapes or their name in dots.

N A L A

- Making patterns develops your child's fluency in writing. Complete these patterns and draw your own. You can use patterns to decorate art work.



- Do maze puzzles with your child.



- Help your child use a junior dictionary to check their spelling.

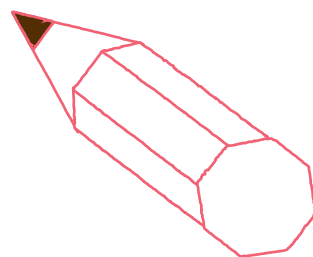
Handwriting

Schools have different ways of teaching writing. Check with your child's teacher about how it is taught in your child's school. Look out for opportunities for your child to use 'real writing', for example lists, labels and signs. Here are some more examples of 'real writing'.

- With your child, make and write cards for special events—birthdays and Christmas.
- Write 'Thank you' letters with your child.
- Sew or stick pages together to make a book and let your child write their own stories.
- Fill out forms to send for offers or a library card.

Self-check for writing

- Do I write clearly and leave spaces between my words?
- Do I write in sentences and use capital letters and full stops?
- Who will read my writing?
- Are my spellings right?
- Did I check my work?
- Have I used interesting words?
- Do I need to look up a dictionary?



Quick Quiz

If your child is a confident reader see if they can do this quiz. Put the letters in the right order. The words are about writing.

An example is: ensil = lines

aepg _____

lpsle _____

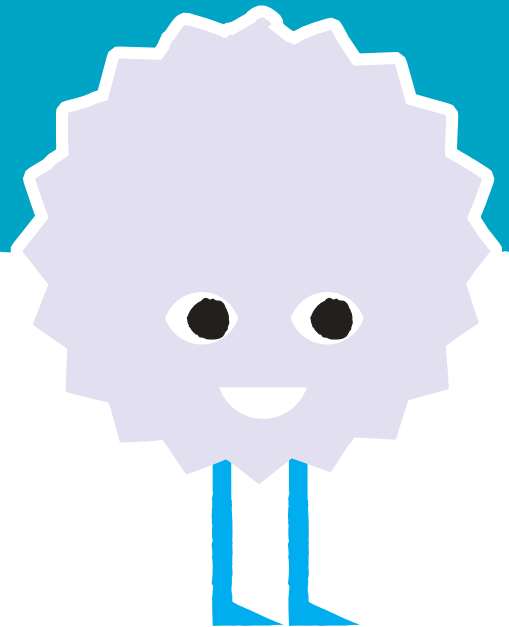
rtiwe _____

Maths around us

Here are some questions that you might have about learning maths.

Do I have to be good at maths to help my child?

What if my child wants to use higher numbers than they use at school?



TIPS

For babies and toddlers

Children learn 'maths' language in a natural way through play.

- Collect boxes and containers of different sizes for your child to play with. Play by fitting them inside each other or putting one on top of the other.
- Shoe shops are good sources of boxes to use for stacking. You can also use shoe boxes as large building blocks with the lids taped on.
- Use bath time as a good opportunity for pouring and emptying games with containers.
- Turn tidying up into a sorting game—for example putting dolls or cars into different boxes.
- Match things that go together—shoe/sock, cup/saucer, for example.
- Count steps out loud together when going up or downstairs.
- Stamp and move to rhythmic music on the radio.
- Sing number rhymes or songs together.
- When putting shopping away, show your child that some things go in the fridge, but big boxes have to fit in the press.
- Count as you do things—putting out plates or clothes for example.

Number rhymes

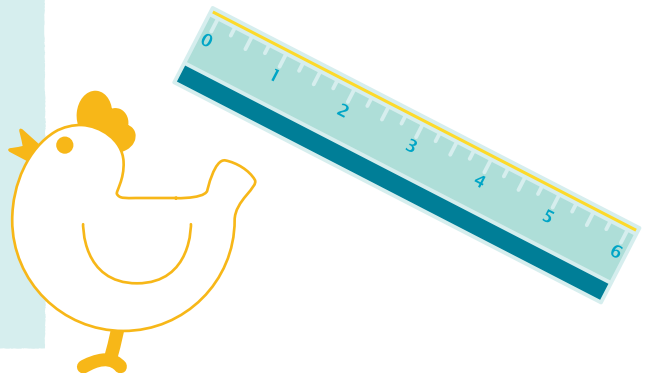
One, two, buckle my shoe

Three, four, knock on the door

Five, six, pick up sticks

Seven, eight, lay them straight

Nine, ten, a big, fat hen





Five green bottles
hanging on the wall
And if one green bottle
should accidentally fall
There'd be four green
bottles hanging on the wall

Four green bottles
hanging on the wall
And if one green bottle
should accidentally fall
There'd be three green
bottles hanging on the wall

Three green bottles
hanging on the wall
And if one green bottle

should accidentally fall
There'd be two green
bottles hanging on the wall

Two green bottles
hanging on the wall
And if one green bottle
should accidentally fall
There'd be one green
bottle hanging on the wall

One green bottle
hanging on the wall
And if one green bottle
should accidentally fall
There'd be no green bottles
hanging on the wall





For pre-schoolers

Everyday activities help your child's understanding of maths.

- Compare things when talking: big/small, long/short, older/younger, faster/slower: "You carry the small box and I'll take the big one."
- Use the words—up/down, over/under, near/far, more/less when talking to your child.
- Talk about the shapes of everyday things. Ask your child what shapes they can see around the room they're in.

Shapes

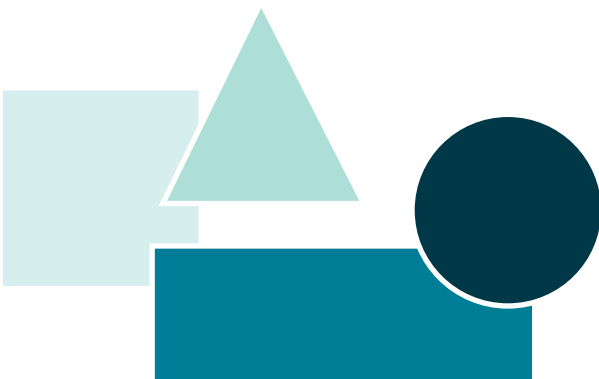
For example, ask if there are any circles, squares, rectangles or triangles or what shape the window is. Doors are rectangular and so is the TV.

- Encourage your child to use blocks that fit together, like Lego®, to help build maths skills.
- Ask your child to look out the window and name any shapes they can see.
- Birthdays are important for candles, cards and wrapping presents. Use this occasion to practise numbers, writing, sizes and shapes.
- Let your child help to put away the washing—matching the socks, sorting clothes and folding towels.

- Use 'time' words—early, late, weekday, weekend, second, minute, hour.

Talk about the time for different things you do every day—"It's nine o'clock, time to go to playschool".

- Let your child see you mark dates on a calendar.
- Make a number book using a different number of objects on each page.



Rhyme for learning how many days in the month

Thirty days hath September,
April, June and November,
All the rest have thirty one,
Except for February,
When once in four,
February has one day more.

Numbers

It takes time to learn that 2 means two things, 5 means five and that the final number you count out refers to a total amount.

- Encourage your child to use jigsaws.
These give lots of practise at putting shapes together to make another shape. You can help by talking and asking about how a piece fits.
- Make shapes from Playdough or Plasticine.
- Make your own fun dough with children.

- The kitchen provides lots of opportunities to practise maths skills with your child.

Set the table—1 knife, 1 fork and 1 spoon for each person.

- Cut fruit into halves and quarters.
- Divide pizza into enough slices for everyone.
- Sort out big and small spoons.
- Weigh out ingredients on scales together.
- Estimate “Is there enough for everyone?”

Homemade fun dough

How to make your own fun dough. This is not suitable for eating.

- 2 cups flour
- 1 cup salt
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup water
- 1 tbsp. vegetable oil
- 1 or 2 drops colouring

Mix dry ingredients well. Add oil and colouring. Knead very well. Keep in airtight container and use within a few days.

Or it can be baked at a low temperature. Shapes can be decorated when cool.

For young school children

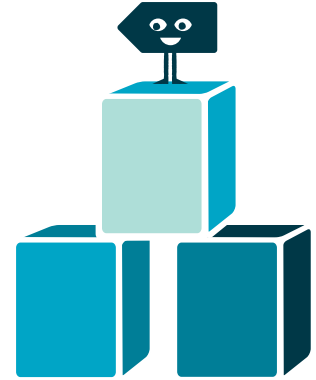
TIPS

Children learn that using maths is an important part of their everyday life.

- Ask your child to put out 2, 3 or 4 toys.
- Put out some small objects on the table and then remove one. Ask your child how many you have in your hand.
- Write a couple of numbers on some paper. Your child matches the number to the correct number of objects.
- Measure how long or wide the room is by counting the number of footsteps it takes to cross it.
- Encourage your child to estimate how many things there are before they count them.
- Use objects to help your child with addition and subtraction when doing their homework.
- Children learn to use a calculator in 4th class, but younger children love to make big numbers. Show your child zero and let them make millions!
- A wall planner shows all the days in a year, so put one where your child can use it. It also lists the months in a row, which your child can learn in the right order.
- Keep a 'small change' jar so your child can sort and count coins.
- A small amount of pocket money helps develop your child's money skills. They learn the names of the coins and what they are worth. Knowing what change you get is a lesson in subtraction.
- Playing games with your child helps maths. Include dominoes, cards or board games with a dice and counters. You could make your own bingo number game for matching numbers.

Maths at school

At school, maths is taught in a structured way, building on what children have already learned. They use the metric system (centimetres, kilos, litres) and learn about number, shape, size and patterns. Children also learn how to use information, solve problems and estimate. They are introduced to addition and subtraction using coloured blocks and counters.



Quick quiz

This quiz is a 'word snake' that you can do with a child who has good reading skills. The words are about learning maths. How many can you find?

addsortmatchsizetimeyearweighcountmeasure
lengthnumberssubtractdivideshapecalendar

Answers: add sort match size time year weigh count
measure length numbers subtract divide shape calendar

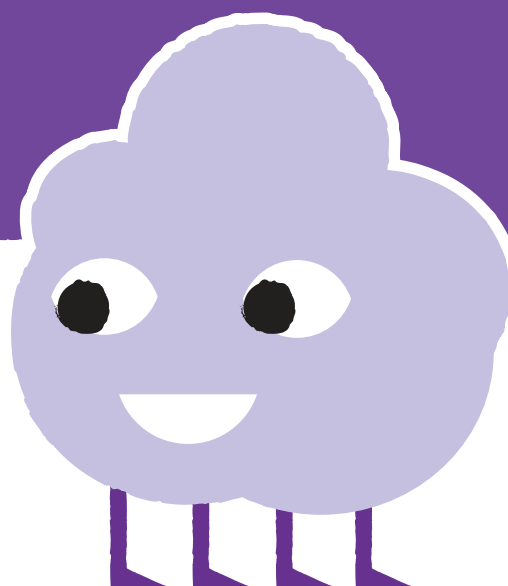
Creative fun

Here are some questions that you might have about enjoying creative activities as you read this chapter.

What can I do if I'm not artistic?

Are babies too young to enjoy art?

How can food be used for a creative activity?



Art and craft

Children need opportunities to be creative and use their imagination.

For babies and toddlers



They need adults to give them opportunities to explore a variety of things to look at and to touch.

- A mobile is a hanging toy. Make one by hanging a few small soft toys by thread from a coat hanger. Put it where your child can see it, perhaps over the cot.
- You can also make a mobile by cutting out pieces of coloured card in different shapes and hanging it up.
- When your baby is sitting up encourage them to reach out for brightly coloured toys, by putting them slightly out of reach.
- Make a 'texture' book by sticking on fabric or paper that feels different to touch. Include pieces of fun fur, plastic, sandpaper, tweed or shiny paper.
- Cut out samples of colours from magazines or pieces of rough or smooth material. Glue them onto a large piece of cardboard for a baby to touch.
- Give easy to hold washable markers from about 12–15 months for drawing.
- Let your child paint with their fingers. Finger painting is an enjoyable and messy activity that can be done on a tray as well as paper.
- Make butterfly paintings by putting two or three colours on one half of a page. Fold the paper over, press down and then open out to see the new shape.
- Use cardboard rolls, vegetables, sponge shapes, leaves or hands to make prints of all kinds. Dip into paint and press on a piece of paper.



Things to collect for art and craft

Boxes of all kinds

Cardboard rolls

Broken necklaces

Pebbles

Leaves

Magazines

Old birthday cards

Old socks and gloves

Elastic bands

Bits of wool and string

Scraps of material

Shoe laces

Used wrapping paper



For pre-schoolers

The activity of doing the artwork can be more important to them than the finished picture.

- Talk about names of colour mixes in painting, for example red and yellow make orange, blue and yellow make green.
- Paint stripes of colour on a page. Cover over with black crayon. Then help your child scrape a design into the crayon to make a picture.
- Make textured prints by pressing objects on play dough or clay.
- Cut out storybook characters from toy catalogues and stick on lollipop sticks to make puppets.
- Help your child make simple puppets from old socks, gloves or cardboard rolls. Parents can use a puppet to tell a story or teach the child in a fun way.
- Help or encourage your child to make a picture by sticking small things to a piece of paper or card. They can use the following:
 - strips of coloured paper from a magazine,
 - coloured tissue paper or sweet papers,
 - dried pasta or rice,
 - material of different textures,
 - leaves, shells, small stones, and
 - glitter, tin foil and tinsel.
- Make 'junk' constructions with your child by sticking together cardboard boxes, rolls and paper.
- Provide pencils and plenty of paper for your child to draw their own pictures.

TIPS

For young school children

These children become better at noticing the world around them and expressing their emotions through art.

- Ask your child to “Take your pencil for a walk around a page” and colour in all the different shapes made.
- Have your child cut out small square shapes from coloured paper in magazines to make mosaic pictures.
- Make potato prints. Cut a potato in half, dip it in paint and press on a sheet of paper.
- Encourage your child to make their own cards and invitations for writing to friends.
- Help your child make decorations for different festivities, such as Halloween and Christmas.
- Make prints with other objects, for example leaves, sponge or corks, by dipping them into paint and pressing onto a page.
- Put names or designs on old T-shirts, runners or pieces of cloth with fabric paints or ‘glitter glue’.
- Let your child practise writing their name by designing a name plate for their book or door.
- Encourage your child to paint a portrait of a family member or a pet.
- Allow time for your child to paint and draw the pictures they want to.
- Ask your child to lie on a large sheet of paper or roll of left-over wallpaper. You or an older child then draws around them, so the child can paint in their shape.





Making games

This is an enjoyable way to learn a variety of skills.

For babies and toddlers



TIPS

Games are a way for them to interact with people.

- Your baby will probably like games that arise naturally, for example 'peep-o'.
- Play 'peep-o' with a toy, where you hide a toy and make it reappear.
- Try action games that involve bouncing your child gently on your knee.
- Show your child how to play circle games, for example Ring-a-rosy.
- Use clapping games to help your child's co-ordination. Pat-a-cake is an example.
- Show your child how to draw large shapes in the air.

Clapping game

Pat-a-cake, pat-a-cake baker's man
Bake me a cake as fast as you can
Prick it and pat it and mark it with B
And put it in the oven for baby and me

For pre-schoolers



TIPS

Children make up their own games, but playing games with others helps their concentration and social skills.

- Play card or board games when you can have a quiet time together with your child.
- Make a picture-matching game by cutting out matching pictures from catalogues and sticking them to card.
- Play the game a few times so the child has a chance to learn the rules and to win!
- Learning to lose is an important thing to learn, so don't always let the child win.
- Let your child learn to follow rules in a game by watching other children play, as in Simon Says or Follow the Leader.



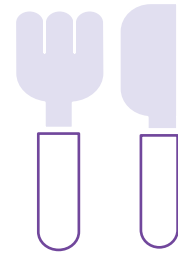


TIPS

For young school children

Games are a way of practising some of the reading and number skills they have learned.

- Encourage your child to play board games. There are lots of board and card games available in the shops, for example Snakes and Ladders and Junior Scrabble, that children enjoy playing.
- Play card games together. Old favourites like Snap and Old Maid can help number and picture matching.
- Play noughts and crosses to help your child plan ahead.
- Make your own card or board games to go with a favourite storybook. Children will reread a book several times to get enough details to make a good board game.
- Make your own games together. This involves deciding
 - whether to make a card or a board game,
 - what colours and design to use,
 - what the rules are, and
 - how many players the game is for.
- When playing, talk about what you are doing, such as, "I need to throw a six to start."
- To improve your child's matching skills, make up number or word bingo.
- Help your child to make their own jigsaws by sticking one of their paintings on cardboard and cutting it into shapes.
- Make large board games for the floor by opening out cardboard boxes and drawing out a game on which children can move around.



Food

A healthy, balanced diet is needed for growth but can help learning too.

For babies and toddlers



Mealtimes can be enjoyable and fun and a treat for their senses. They also give children a chance to listen to conversations.

- Give your child tiny sweet, sour and savoury tastes.
- Allow your toddler to feed themselves. It helps their co-ordination.
- Put their spoon directly in front of them. This lets them decide which hand to use.

For pre-schoolers



Preparing snacks can help improve eating habits and learning.

- Children are more likely to eat food that is good for them if they help to prepare it. So let your child:
 - mix yoghurt and fruit for milk shakes,
 - slice bananas or kiwis,
 - peel satsumas, or
 - wash berries for fruit salad.
- Make food art
 - Slice or chop fruit, vegetables and cheese slices.
 - Arrange to make 'pictures' or designs.
 - Eat.
- Let your child help you make salads.
- Involve your child in growing mustard and cress seeds. Sprinkle seeds on a piece of wet kitchen towel placed on a plate and put the sprouts in salads or sandwiches.

Cheese dip

2 tablespoons natural yoghurt
2 tablespoons cottage cheese
2 tablespoons low fat
mayonnaise
1 teaspoon mustard

Mix all ingredients well together. Serve with raw vegetables such as celery or carrot sticks or with corn crisps.



TIPS



For young school children

Cooking provides lots of practical learning opportunities, while having fun.

- Help your child learn to:
 - wash hands before preparing food,
 - use utensils carefully,
 - chop, slice, knead and cut out shapes,
 - use words related to size, shape and temperature, and
 - measure in millimetres (ml) litres (l) and grams (g).
- Ask them questions such as "What will we make?", "What can we make with the things we have?", "Do we need to buy anything extra?"
- Read the recipe together to see if you need to go shopping.
 - Plan and make a shopping list with your child.
 - Read the list at the shop.
 - See how much money is needed.
- Talk about it later: "How does it taste?", "Did we use too much flour?"
- Help your child put together a recipe book of things they helped to make. You can include their drawings or take photos.

Gingerbread cookies

This recipe makes a popular treat for children.

350 g plain flour

¼ teaspoon salt

2 dessert spoons ground ginger

75 g butter or margarine

50 g sugar

3 dessert spoons Golden Syrup

2 small eggs

Cream butter, sugar and syrup in a bowl. Gradually add the beaten eggs. Sieve in flour, salt and ginger. Make it into a mixture that you can roll out with a rolling pin.

Cut into shapes and bake for 20 to 25 minutes at gas mark 3–4 or 170°–180°C. Decorate when cool.





Learning outside

Here are some questions that you might have about family learning outdoors as you read this chapter.

How can my children learn outside if I don't have a garden?

How can I keep children occupied during the school holidays?



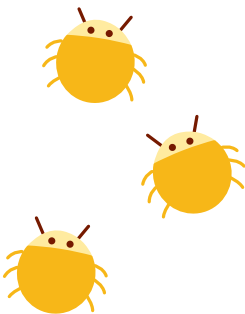
Playing outside



For babies and toddlers

Children explore the world through their senses by looking, listening and touching. They enjoy outdoor space — rolling over, crawling, walking and running on different surfaces.

- Let your child experience shapes and textures outside—leaves, puddles, grass or sand—by looking at and touching them.
- Take your child for walks in the garden, park or street. It gives them a chance to see and to hear what is going on around them.
- Encourage your child to look at small things—insects, flowers and leaves.



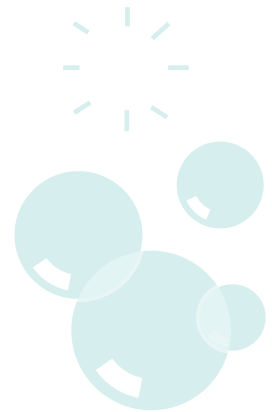


For pre-schoolers



These children need space to move freely and develop their movement skills.

- Have races with your child to give them space to run, jump, hop and skip outdoors.
 - Play at throwing and catching ball with your child.
 - Encourage your child to count and jump and count and skip with friends.
 - Have an Easter egg hunt. Hide eggs around the play space.
 - Look for and match leaves or flowers, telling your child to “find the same shape”.
- In summer, provide sand and water play, using old basins as containers. But never leave your child alone when they are playing with water.
 - Let your child blow bubbles using washing up liquid.
 - Allow your child to paint with water on outside walls using household paintbrushes.
 - With your child, draw with chalk on a path—the rain will wash it away!



TIPS
↙

For young school children

**The garden, park or street
can be a place to learn.**

- Play some of your favourite childhood games with your child.
 - Skipping and hopscotch are good for balancing.
 - Marbles or ball games help co-ordination.
- Plant cherry tomatoes in baskets.
Your child can measure the amount of water given to tomato plants and keep a record.
- Help your child make obstacle courses or build with large objects, such as boxes, planks and wheels.

- Children like to plant fast-growing things. You can grow some things with your child indoors.
 - Sprouted seeds grow in a container. Rinse out with water every day until they sprout. Put sprouts in salads or stirfries.
 - Plant nasturtium seeds, in a hanging basket.
 - Sunflowers or pumpkins grow very big and can be grown in pots. You can then measure your child's height against the sunflower.
 - Bulbs take longer than seeds to grow but can be planted in pots.



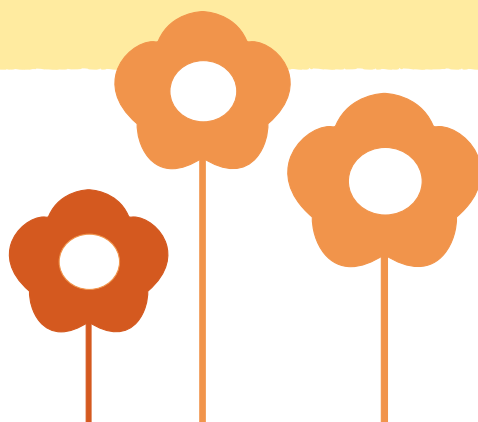
- Some children love exploring by taking apart things such as old telephones, clocks and so on. They are full of interesting shapes and children can see how things fit together. If you let your child take apart any of these things remove any batteries before you hand them over.
- Write or draw a list of clues for a treasure hunt outside. Hide the 'treasure' somewhere and make up clues related to your own space. For example 'Take six steps from the back door...'
- Give your child a bag and a list of things to find outside and put in a bag such as a leaf, stone, daisy or conkers.
- Help your child to collect flowers and leaves and press them in a heavy book, when dry, they can be used for making cards.
- Let your child help care for pets.

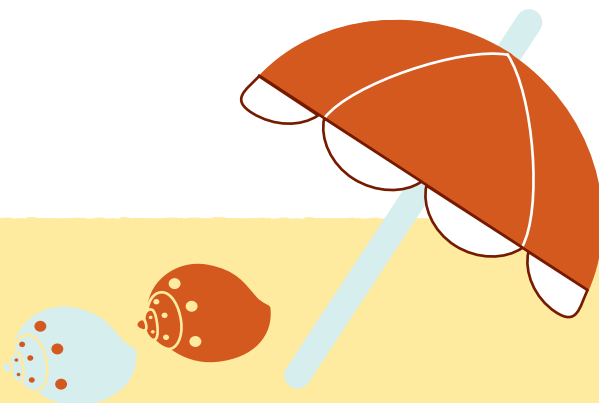


Family outings

Outings provide opportunities for conversation and for all the family to learn new things.

- Talk about where you are going before and after.
- Go for a walk down the road or to the local shop and talk about what you see.
- Put sticky tape (sticky side out) around a toddler's wrist so they can attach the things they collect as they walk.
- Go blackberry picking with your child and make blue milkshakes later.
- Visit a shopping centre to window shop.
- Join in a local tree planting in national tree week.
- For a food shopping trip, make a list for your child.
 - Draw simple fruit and vegetables shapes if your child does not yet read.
 - Write a short list if your child reads.
 - In the shop, ask your child to find things for you.
 - Let your child use the picture weighing scales for fruit and vegetables.
 - Let them count items for you, as in "Put six oranges in the trolley."
 - Give your child money to pay for some items.





- Find out what is available in your area. Check your local paper or library for special events for families. Good places include;
 - local park or playground,
 - the beach or a swimming pool,
 - storytime at the library,
 - forest parks or woods,
 - children's farm or animal shelter,
 - an art gallery or theatre,
 - a heritage centre or local museum, or
 - summer projects or sports clubs.
- Children enjoy picnics, so let your child help with planning and getting the food ready.
- Play an A–Z treasure hunt. Your child finds or writes down the name of things beginning with the letters.
- On car trips:
 - count cars of a named colour or type,
 - count animals or people on bikes,
 - find the numbers 0–9 on number plates,
 - listen to story CDs,
 - sing songs or rhymes, or
 - play "I spy". If your child is young, they can name a colour rather than a letter.
- At the seaside let your child
 - write and draw in sand,
 - do lots of pouring and emptying,
 - dig, build and fill buckets with sand, and
 - count and collect stones and shells.

Quick Quiz

This quiz is for you to do with a child who is able to read. Put the words in the right order in the two sentences below. The sentences have family learning messages!

can Parents together. and children learning enjoy
fun of lots can have seaside. the at We

Answer: Parents and children can enjoy learning together.
We can have lots of fun at the seaside.

Where to find help

As a parent, you know your child better than anyone else does. Sometimes talking to relatives or friends can be useful if you are concerned about your child. At other times, it is helpful to get some professional advice.

If you are worried about your baby's or toddler's development, you can ask your public health nurse or your GP for help. You can also get practical advice from people who work with your child, such as a playgroup leader or crèche manager. It is important for children to get any help they need as early as possible.

Some children may need extra support when they start school, so you should discuss this in advance with the class teacher. If you think your schoolchild is having difficulty, talk first to the class teacher. You could bring someone with you, or have some questions ready, to get the most from your discussion. When a child has a problem learning to read and write they may need some extra help both at home and at school.

If the problem differs with your child's ability in other areas, you can ask for an assessment through the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS). Your child's class teacher or principal will have details for your area.

If you need to improve your reading, writing, maths or digital skills NALA can help:

- Freephone 1800 20 20 65; or by
- Text 'Learn' to 50050.

We will talk to you about your learning options. You can study online or work with a tutor over the phone. We can also refer you to your local adult literacy centre. It's free and you decide what, where and how you want to learn.

Where else to find help

- Parentline Helps you to deal with the challenges of parenting. Parentline has trained facilitators you can talk to in confidence, and without judgment. Calls come from parents of different aged children, including adult children. Telephone: 1890 927 277.
- The Dyslexia Association of Ireland Supports adults and children who have dyslexia. Dyslexia makes it harder for some people to learn, to read, write and spell. Telephone: 01 677 6001. See www.dyslexia.ie/
- Webwise Provides information, advice and free education resources about internet safety to young people, teachers and parents. See www.webwise.ie/parents/
- Barnardos Supports children and families with information such as parenting courses (including for teen parents) and can help during difficult times. Telephone: 1800 910 123. See also www.barnardos.ie/resources/parents
- Citizen information centres Provides up to date information on public services and entitlements. Telephone: 0761 07 4000. See www.citizensinformation.ie
- Schooldays Provides list of primary and secondary schools. See www.schooldays.ie
- National Parents Council Helpline: 01 887 4477. See also www.npc.ie
- Early Childhood Ireland Provides list of childcare providers and parent and toddler groups. 01 4057 100.
- Scoilnet Resources for children set out in different age groups. See www.scoilnet.ie
- Childline Helpline (number changes every morning) for children, parents and carers for guidance on children's welfare. See www.ispcc.ie/ispcc-support-line.
- National Council for Curriculum and Assessment Has lots of resources for parents and guardians. See www.ncca.ie/en/primary/resources-for-parents

Lifelong learning

We learn throughout our lives. Learning with your children is informal, as you follow their interests.

It could be nice for you to attend a learning programme. There are lots of adult education day and evening courses throughout the country. The 16 Education and Training Boards (ETBs) around the country have Adult Education Centres.

If you would like to improve your own reading, spelling, maths or I.T. skills there are lots of options.

You can:

- Attend the adult literacy service of the ETBs. There are over 50,000 adults improving their reading, writing and maths skills in local ETB adult literacy centres. You can work on your own with a trained tutor or join a small group of other learners. It is a free and confidential service.

- Study online by yourself on NALA's website www.learnwithnala.ie.
- Work with a tutor over the phone on our Distance Learning Service.
- Do a combination of the above.

For information about the options above:

- Ring NALA on 1800 20 20 65
- Freetext "Learn" to 500 50. One of our operators will ring you back.
- Or log onto our website www.learnwithnala.ie and start learning today.

Help My Kid Learn

A website for parents
of 0–12 year olds.
See helpmykidlearn.ie
for more fun activities.



www.helpmykidlearn.ie is a website that highlights how children learn as part of their everyday lives and the positive things that children can learn at home from their families.

By speaking and listening to your child, by talking and reading to them, by pointing out words and notices at home or out and about, you introduce your child to the world of language—spoken and written.

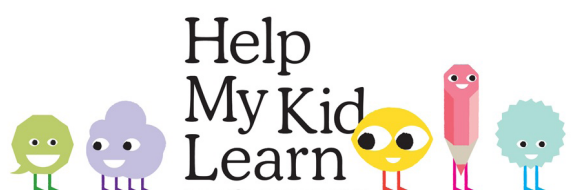
Through playing with your child, they learn new words, and learn to think and to talk about their thoughts or feelings. For example, pretending to be a nurse or doctor, a shopkeeper or looking at and talking about picture books, all help your child to speak, to listen, to read and to write. When your child starts school, you continue to have a key role in helping them.

www.helpmykidlearn.ie is for the parents and guardians of children aged 0–12 years, from birth to the end of primary school.

To keep the website easy, when we use the word 'parent', we mean parents, guardians, family members and childminders.

The website is about how you and your family can enjoy learning together. It is designed to support parents with fun activities and tips according to their child's age. And each age group has lots of ideas for helping children with talking, playing, reading, writing and using numbers.

Since your child was born you have been teaching them to learn about the world. We hope that you enjoy the tips, activities and links provided by this website and we would welcome your feedback so that we can keep making improvements that help you, help your kid learn.



What is NALA?

The National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA) is a charity and membership based organisation. We work to support adults with unmet literacy and numeracy needs to take part fully in society and to have access to learning opportunities that meet their needs. NALA does this by raising awareness of the importance of literacy, doing research and sharing good practice, providing distance learning services and by lobbying for further investment to improve adult literacy, numeracy and digital skills.

Registered Charity Number: 20020965

Charity Number: 8506

Company Number: 342807



www.helpmykidlearn.ie

National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA)

Sandford Lodge
Sandford Close
Ranelagh, Dublin 6

Phone: 01 412 7900

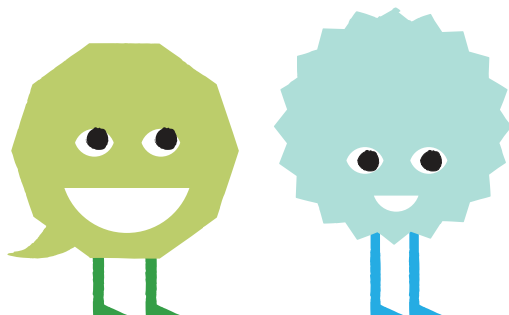
Freephone: 1 800 20 20 65

Website: www.nala.ie

Email: info@nala.ie

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Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

SOLAS
learning works



Ireland's European Structural and
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2014-2020
Co-funded by the Irish Government
and the European Union



European Union
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European Social Fund



NALA

National Adult Literacy Agency
Aisíneacht Náisiúnta Litearthachta do Aosaigh

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