

# Teaching Writing in the Early Years

## Motor skills development

Before children can begin to make marks and learn to write they need to have developed good strength and control in their arm, hand, and finger muscles. There are many activities that help to develop this strength e.g.

- Digging in the mud, sand
- Playing with play dough
  - Pouring, mixing and stirring
- Climbing and balancing
- Threading beads, sewing and weaving
- Playing catch and other games needing hand to eye co-ordination.

## Letter formation

In phonics the children are taught the sounds as well as a rhyme that may help them to recall the letter formation. Children will get letters muddled and will reverse them in writing, this is normal and will improve with practise. Doodling shapes and patterns will help children to begin to develop more of a flow in their mark making which will help with letter formation. Adults modelling writing is valuable for children to see. They will gain confidence in formation and understand of the purpose of writing. It is interesting to consider how often we handwrite anything now rather than type into a device.

## Writing Words

Children will start making marks at a young age and will begin to give these marks meaning (see some examples of emergent writing further on). As this develops children will want to start being able to write words using correctly formed letters. As they learn phonics they will be able to start building words. We model how and encourage children to break down words (segment) into the sounds they can hear and use the graphemes they know to record this. This means that many words will not be spelt correctly but this is ok! If children are spelling phonetically (spelling as they say/hear it) i.e. orinj instead of orange or myooseeum instead of museum this is great and means that they are using their phonics toolkit effectively to begin communicating more in writing. As children get older, more confident and experienced they will begin to learn the correct spellings for those trickier words.

## Writing Sentences

We encourage the children to write independently throughout their play. We provide resources to help them find the sounds or tricky words they want to use giving them autonomy in helping themselves to become independent writers. To be able to write a sentence children must first be able to say the sentence that they want to write down. In more structured writing activities, we must first teach what a sentence is, a string of words put together to give a complete message or thought. We rehearse what we want to say in lots of different voices to try and help us remember what we want to write. We say the sentence, lots of times and in different voices. We count how many words. We start to write down one word at a time. Teachers will model this with the children so that they can become more confident on their own. We use high quality books to enthuse and inspire the children to want to write their own versions of stories and ensure that there are plenty of opportunities throughout each topic to explore writing for different purpose i.e. lists, labels, facts, stories and messages.

## Assessment

At the end of the Reception year writing is assessed against the Early Learning Goal, broken into 3 parts as below.

- 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.

The Early Learning goal for physical development (fine motor skills) also forms part of the assessment for writing in EYFS.








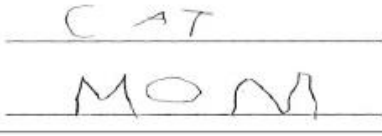

- Hold a pencil effectively in preparation for fluent writing – using the tripod grip in almost all cases;
- Use a range of small tools, including scissors, paint brushes and cutlery;
- Begin to show accuracy and care when drawing.

Please remember that this is a generic target for the end of reception year and does not take into account the age and developmental stages of individual children. Children all develop at different times and will not all be physically or emotionally ready for writing at this level and if necessary, this would remain a target for them for as long as was appropriate.

## HeidiSongs' Chart of the Developmental Progression of A Child's Writing

 <p>1. Pictures</p>	 <p>2. Random Scribbling</p>	 <p>3. Scribble Writing (Written in linear fashion to mimic real writing.)</p>	 <p>4. Symbols That Represent Letters</p>
 <p>5. Random Letters (No relationship between sounds of letters and what the child is trying to say.)</p>	 <p>6. Letter Strings (Progresses from left to right and top to bottom when the child "reads" his writing.)</p>	 <p>7. Letter Groups (The groups have spaces in between to resemble words.)</p>	 <p>8. Environmental Print (Child copies print found in the room, often without knowing what the words are.)</p>
<p>Theh can r (The horse can run.)</p> <p>9. Beginning Sounds (Child begins to write simple sentences using sight words and just the beginning sounds of words.)</p>	<p>We wn to the s (We went to the store.)</p> <p>10. Early Inventive Spelling (Includes the same elements as the previous level, but with more consonant sounds represented and spaces between words.)</p>	<p>To daye i wat to play witht te white board and the shapex and I won to play with my frn</p> <p>(Today I want to play with the white board and the shapes, and I want to play with my friend.)</p> <p>11. Inventive Spelling (Has the same elements as the previous level, but with more sounds per word written, including the vowels. Some conventional spelling patterns may appear.)</p>	<p>One day I saw my Frid it was Israel and Antonio and They got lost I had Thim. The end</p> <p>(One day, I see my friends. It was Israel and Anthony and they got lost. I found them. The end.)</p> <p>12. Transitional Writing (Includes all of the previous elements, plus some real spellings of words with silent letters and other spelling patterns. Punctuation is beginning to appear.)</p>

## Stages of Emergent Writing

Stage	Description	Example
<b>Drawing</b>	Drawings that represent writing	
<b>Scribbling</b>	Marks or scribbles the child intends to be writing	
<b>Wavy scribbles or mock handwriting</b>	Wavy scribbles that imitate cursive writing and have a left-to-right progression; child pretends to write words	
<b>Letter-like forms or mock letters</b>	Letters and marks that resemble letter-like shapes	
<b>Letter strings</b>	Strings of letters that do not create words, written left to right, including uppercase and lowercase letters	
<b>Transitional writing</b>	Letters with spaces in between to resemble words; letters/words copied from environmental print; letters often reversed	
<b>Invented or phonetic spelling</b>	Different ways to represent the sounds in words; the first letter of the word or beginning and ending sounds represent the entire word	
<b>Beginning word and phrase writing</b>	Words with beginning, middle, and ending letter sounds; short phrases	
<b>Conventional spelling and sentence writing</b>	Correct spelling of words, generally the child's name and words such as <i>mom</i> and <i>dad</i> ; sentences with punctuation and correct use of uppercase and lowercase letters	

The website below provides a lot of additional information about the early stages of children's writing and how skills progress if you wish to find out more  
[Stages of Emergent Writing | Thoughtful Learning K-12](#)