

Children learn to be writers from an early age by copying and so much of their ability to write can be encouraged by what happens at home.

Learning to Write: Advice for Parents of Students who are Deaf/Hard of Hearing

There is NO RIGHT AGE for a child to be at any particular stage in writing. Some children will spend longer than others and move backwards and forwards through stages. Don't worry. They need praise and encouragement to write. Don't worry about spelling when your child is beginning to write. Make it fun, be interested and let your child see that you write as well. (RNID Education Guidelines project)

Writing together

It is a good idea to involve your child when you write or type at home. Much of what young children read and write is incidental and may include labels or signs on items and rooms around the house as well as text messages.

Work with your child to make up stories together; beginning with a picture, a drawing, or photograph. Share ideas about the picture. Begin with writing under the picture using the words provided by the child. By writing about what the child is actually saying, the language is coming from her/him, so the child sees the words written and they are reading what they are saying. In this way, words make sense and are meaningful. Meaning is what motivates a child to read and to write. The child can also write all or part of the story.

Points to remember

Children need both confidence and the ability to write to be able to put their ideas on paper and to become self-confident writers. It is important that you choose something the child will be interested in sharing.

Encourage the child to share what he writes or draws with family members, grandparents and friends. Their response to the child's efforts will serve to encourage the child and reinforce the language that was used in the activity.

Examples of experiences or activities your child might want to share at school:

- Your child has a (new) pet. You've chosen a name for the pet – where the pet will sleep, what the pet feels like and how you will look after this pet.
- Something that was made at home - models, drawings, baking, growing things.
- Stories, songs or rhymes you have enjoyed together.
- Jobs done in the house, a chore done in the garden, washing the car.

Ways of assisting a child to write independently

Remember that writing can be a social activity as well as a means of self-expression. So...

- Talk or use sign language to explore ideas, characters, location, time, weather...
- Use story/writing frames for sequencing and matching written phrases to pictures
- Provide a structure for story writing:

Beginning

Middle

End

or

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One Day....

At first...

Suddenly...

Then ...

After a while ...

Finally, ...

- Write story in pairs: e.g. parent & child.
- Look again at the events in the story to be clear about the sequence.
- Guide the discussion to help child to realise what they actually know.
- Use opportunities to orally rehearse (or sign support) the written language structure before writing.
- Provide supportive and positive feedback to add to information given by the child or to reinforce the child's confidence.

An Example of a 'Story Frame' for deaf pupils *(RNID Education Guidelines Project¹)*

1. Write the main idea for opening of the story into the first bone
2. Write the main idea for the story's ending into the last bone
3. Create the story sequence and write ideas for paragraphs into the middle bones (use as few or as many bones as you need).
4. Put flesh on to the bones using these headings:
 - Who? When? Where?
 - What happened? (action)
 - What was it like? (description)
 - Who said what? How did they say it? E.g. cried; sobbed; whispered, shouted Now use this plan to write your story

Bare Bones

¹ These ideas are adapted from: Royal National Institute for Deaf People. Education Guidelines Project: Promoting Literacy in Deaf Pupils. <https://www.actiononhearingloss.org.uk/>