



Homework Tips for Parents and Carers

Encourage children to learn effectively by being:

Resilient learners: Are they in the best environment to complete their homework? Have they managed potential distractions effectively e.g. turned off the television? Is this a suitable time to do their homework e.g. not too late at night/ after their busiest day at school? Are they willing to try and new task and challenge themselves? Are they ready to persevere and not give up even if the homework is challenging? ('I can't do it **yet**', rather than 'I can't do it'.)

Resourceful learners: Have they chosen the resources that they will need to help them complete the task? Have they thought about how their homework already links to what they have learnt about in school? If they get stuck, can they think of a plan to help them to find an answer e.g. using a dictionary?

Reflective learners: Can they understand the task and explain what they have to achieve before they start? Have they thought about what they will do before doing it? Have they remembered to check their completed homework for mistakes?

Some strategies are outlined below to help children to improve their reading and learn Spellings and Mental Maths facts effectively. Why not try one or more different strategies each week? Remember that all children learn in different ways and some strategies may be more helpful than others for your child.



How to help your child with Maths

1. Practise mental maths with your child anywhere: on the bus, while walking to school, in the bath. The key is to practise little and often. Look for any chances to count eg counting in 1's, 2's or 10's as your child climbs stairs, skips or throws and catches a ball.
2. Chant or sing mental maths facts such as your number bonds to 10 or your times tables. There are lots of great maths songs on youtube (remember to check content first and supervise your child when using youtube).
3. Enlarge and display the week's mental maths facts around the house: in your child's bedroom, on the fridge or even round the bath! Try focusing on just a few at a time to build confidence, then introduce more.
4. Play 'Champion' or 'Brains versus Calculators' - write some mental maths calculations on small cards then turn them over one at a time. Can your child give the answer more quickly than you? Or can they answer using their mental maths before you manage to type out the sum on a calculator to find the answer?
5. Use toys to help younger children to practise number facts. For example, building a wall ten bricks long from different size bricks in Lego can teach children about ways of making 10, while choosing three different coloured beads to string on a necklace in a repeating pattern can teach children to count in threes.
6. Use Mathletics for extra mental maths practice. Your child can log into Mathletics through www.mathletics.co.uk or there is a free Mathletics app that you can download. Other helpful websites include: <http://www.primaryhomeworkhelp.co.uk/maths/> http://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/ks2/maths/number/mental_maths/play/
7. Play: 'The answer is e.g. 10, what is the question?' The answer responses could be anything from 9+1 to 10,000-9,990. Award points for 'most exciting answer' 'simplest answer' 'longest answer' etc.
8. Connect maths to daily life. Let your children know the importance of maths in day-to-day living. Talk about the ways you use maths in your job and around the house. Ask them how they used maths during the day.
9. Practise mental maths using coins when shopping. Talk about which coins are needed, find small totals and change. Pocket money can be a good way of teaching children addition, subtraction and keeping within a budget.
10. Play fun family games which involve maths and mental calculation e.g. bowling, dominoes, Uno, Junior Monopoly or chess or play games in the car such as adding licence plate numbers or counting objects seen e.g., red cars.
11. Get children involved in helping out and cooking. They can measure ingredients, time how long food will take to cook or estimate the number of potatoes needed to feed everyone, the number of knives and forks needed at the table.
12. Ask children to estimate measurements, distances, time and shopping bills then compare the estimate with actual.
13. Link sports and maths: if your child enjoys sports, discuss batting averages, points per game, fastest serve. If you watch a game with your child, read the newspaper report together the next day and talk about the maths concepts.

How to help your child with Reading



‘Research shows that reading with your child is the single most important thing you can do to help your child’s education. It’s best to read little and often, so try to put aside some time for it every day. Think of ways to make reading fun - you want your child to learn how pleasurable books can be. If you’re both enjoying talking about the content of a particular page, linger over it for as long as you like. Books aren’t just about reading the words on the page, they can also present new ideas and topics for you and your child to discuss.’ (BBC Schools)

- Visit the library as often as possible - take out CDs and DVDs as well as books.
- Schedule a regular time for reading - perhaps when you get home from school, just before bed or even first thing in the morning if your child is fresher then.
- Look for books on topics that you know your child is interested in - maybe dragons, insects, cookery or a certain sport.
- Make sure that children’s books are easily accessible in different rooms around your house.
- Give your child a special bookmark to mark their page.
- With older children, read your books and magazines while your children read-you could sit together to make it a special quiet time. You could share in their reading by reading a book that they have chosen. If you choose to read the same book, you can chat about the book, for example asking "Which part are you up to? Did you get to Chapter 5 yet? What do you think about what happened to Harry?"
- Cut out interesting articles from magazines or newspapers that would interest your child - funny or serious - football, animals, local people or places they know. Read them out loud, pointing to the words or ask an independent reader to read it for themselves. Pursue any discussion that follows - this is a great vocabulary builder.
- Teach your child to keep a children’s dictionary. If you read with your child, make a list of two or three unfamiliar words as you go and then afterwards look up the word together. If your child reads independently, ask them to make a list of three or four words looked up while reading and discuss together at the end of each reading session.
- Develop your child’s understanding, or comprehension, of what they have read by discussing the book in detail and asking some of the questions below.

Before reading

Why did you choose this book? What is the title of the book? What does the cover tell you about the book? What do you think the book is about? What are you curious to find out about this book? What do you already know about this book? Have you read any other books by this author? What can we find out from the synopsis (‘blurb’ on the back of the book?

During and after reading

(Literal answers: the answer is right there in the text. These questions are the simplest type to answer.)

What did..... do? Who did..... How many..... were/are there? Who are.....? Can you tell me what this word/bit means? What kind of is that?

(Inference: the answers are found in different parts of the story and your child might have to look for clues in the text and think more carefully)

How do you make/do.....? What happened when..... did.....? What happened to.....? What do you think might happen next OR what happened before? How many times... What examples can you find? Where did this happen? Where was..... when this was happening? How did (this character) change throughout the story? What do you think will happen next? What is the problem in the book? Why do you think the character did that?

(Evaluation: The answer is not in the story; your child needs to think about the whole story as well as wider experiences and explain opinions and thoughts.)

When you were reading this part, what were you picturing in your head? Have you ever...If you could...If you were going to...In your opinion...Do you agree with.....? Why? Do you know anyone who.....? How do you feel about.....? Which of the characters did you like best? Why? Tell about a part that you liked or disliked and tell why?



How to help your child with Spelling

1. Help your child to use the '**Look, Cover, Write, Check**' Method. **Look** carefully at a spelling word-**Cover** the spelling word. Visualize the covered word in the mind. **Write** the word from memory. **Check** what has been written with the uncovered word. Repeat until you are confident.
2. Trace words- in the air, on the table, in condensation on the shower screen, in a tray of sand, using finger-paints, chalks outside on the floor.
3. Remind your child of the following quick, useful strategies to help them remember a tricky word's spelling. This is especially useful when a word is not phonetically regular:
 - Find words within the word (there's a 'hen' in 'when'!)
 - Break the word up into smaller parts (Wed + nes + day = Wednesday) or into sounds (th-a-nk)
 - Make up a mnemonic or silly sentence using the letters (big elephants can always understand small elephants spells 'because')
 - Say the word as it is written (like 'friends'= fri-ends)
4. Look for general spelling rules and patterns. There will always be exceptions, but they work most of the time eg :
Most question words start 'wh' i before e except after c
Nouns ending in 'y' change to 'ies' Use 'ce' for nouns and 'se' for verbs (you advise with advice)
Add 's' for plurals except those that end in 's', 'x', 'z', 'ch' and 'sh', when you add 'es'
When adding 'ing' or 'ed', double the last consonant after a short vowel sound (so drop becomes dropping or dropped)
Don't drop the final 'e' when you add 'ly' ('comely'), but do drop it to add 'ing' ('coming')
5. Ask your child to write the words using a different colour for parts of each word, especially letters regularly confusing your child e.g. if 'which' is being spelt wrong, different colours could be used for wh/i/ch.
6. Make lists of the week's words using small pieces of scrap paper or the back of old greetings cards. Put the lists around the house e.g. on your child's door, on the 'fridge, in the bathroom. Use a different colour pen for each word- Have a mini 'spelling quiz' each time your child spots a spelling word.
7. Use magnetic letters or scrabble tiles to spell the words. Encourage your child to say each letter or sound out loud as it is placed to spell the word. Play games, jumbling up the letters for your child to re-arrange or removing a letter secretly- can your child work out which one has been taken?
8. Put movement into learning words. Ask your child to clap for each letter or take a step for each letter as he/she spells it out loud. This will help "lock in" the correct sequence of letters, as well as develop full recall for the word.
9. Ask your child to be the teacher and test you on the spelling words. Either orally or on paper, spell the words and let your child mark them. If you have spelt the word incorrectly, your child will need to teach you how to spell it correctly!
10. Play rhyme families. Is there a word which rhymes with your spelling word? Does it have the same or a different spelling? Can you make up a silly rhyming sentence with the words?
11. Look up the word in a dictionary. Make sure that your child knows what it means. Can your child say the word in a sentence? Can they use the word in a question? Are there different forms of this word eg talk/ talking/talked. Older children could find out which language the word originally comes from.
12. Play 'hangman' with the spelling words. Can your child guess which word you have chosen? Can they remember the correct amount of spaces to mark when it is their turn to choose a word?
13. Write a spelling word in large letters on a paper strip. Ask your child to spell the word out loud. Fold over the last letter of the word so it is hidden from view. Ask your child to spell the whole word out loud again, including the hidden last letter. Continue folding the letters over one at a time until your child has to spell the whole word from memory.
14. Write the word in a sentence, remembering a capital letter at the start and a .? or ! at the end. Can your child write a paragraph, poem or even short story which includes all of their weekly spelling words? Younger children might write only the spelling words in a different colour, while the adult writes the rest of the story.
15. Choose a spelling word. Make a rule that no-one can say that word for one whole day- you can only spell it out.
16. Ask your child to write the week's spelling words on two sets of separate small cards. Use to play 'Snap' or 'Pairs', where all the cards are placed face down and two are turned over. If the cards match, the player keeps them.
17. Let your child use your mobile 'phone, tablet or computer to type out the words. If the spell-check is turned on and a word is misspelt, your child can try to correct their spelling to make the spell-check red line disappear. On the computer, experiment with different fonts and colours- let your child print their typed list of spelling words out and use it to carry on learning the words that week. Websites to help with spelling: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/spellits/> <http://www.funbrain.com/spell/> <http://www.primaryhomeworkhelp.co.uk/literacy/>