

Helping your deaf child to read and write

**For parents
with an
8–11 year old**



Our vision is of a
world without barriers
for every deaf child.

Introduction



This booklet will support you with helping your child to read and write. It is the third of three booklets for parents of children aged 3–4, 5–7 and 8–11. You may wish to read the booklet for children aged 5–7, especially if your child has just turned 8.

It contains two main sections:

1. developing your child's reading skills
2. developing your child's writing skills

Your child will be following particular programmes of work to develop their literacy (reading and writing) skills. You can talk to their class teacher and Teacher of the Deaf about how you can support your child with these programmes and help with any challenges.

There is a lot of information in this booklet, but the key points to remember are:

- give your child lots of opportunities for conversation so they can develop their language and learn new words and phrases,
- read with your child and encourage them to read a wide range of texts,
- encourage them to write,
- make learning as fun as possible, especially with games,
- recognise what your child does well, and praise them.

Lots of the activities in this booklet can be done with both hearing and deaf children, but deaf children may benefit from spending more time on them and doing them more often.

Don't forget that you can talk to other parents of deaf children about their ideas about and experiences of developing their child's language, reading and writing on NDCS's Parent Place forum: www.ndcs.org.uk/parentplace.

The information in this publication is also suitable for families whose child has **glue ear**.

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NDCS uses the word 'deaf' to refer to all levels of hearing loss.

Why is language important?

Language helps children to learn and understand what is going on at home, at school or in the playground. It also helps them to make friends and form strong relationships.

Good language skills help children to read and write (imagine how hard it is to try to read or write a foreign language if you don't understand it).

Good language skills mean a child can chat about age-appropriate topics and use:

- colloquial language (informal, spoken, conversational language rather than formal speech or writing),
- figurative expressions, such as, “she is like a rose”, “his eyes are like stars” and “she is as cool as a cucumber”, which compare one thing to another – they help children to write and speak with expression and feeling,
- slang words.

These skills also help children learn to empathise – to imagine and understand what other people are thinking.

Your child's ability to read more complex books and to write interesting stories, reports and articles will rely a lot on their language. They need to be able to extend their knowledge and understand the meaning of more and more words and phrases.

These tips will help you to develop your child's language in the home.

- Build opportunities for conversation and discussion into everyday activities, for example, shopping, cooking, gardening.
- Play games that give you the chance to discuss them and introduce new vocabulary.
- Help your child to learn words for feelings so they can recognise, express and talk about emotions.
- Understand and empathise with others – seeing this will help your child to relate to other people and will support their social and emotional wellbeing.
- Make sure there is a good listening environment at home with minimal background noise and plenty of soft furnishings to absorb echoes.
- Get close to your child and in their field of vision when you communicate – this helps to improve sound quality, and they can see your lips and body language.
- Make sure that your child's hearing equipment, such as hearing aids, cochlear implants or radio aids are working.

As your child gets older it is important to explain new words and phrases to them, especially phrases where the meaning can't be understood just from the individual words of the phrase, for example, “raining cats and dogs”, “in the doghouse” and “bright as a button”. These phrases are called idioms and add colour and interest to what is said or written. Hearing children usually pick them up from overhearing everyday speech but deaf children may find this harder.



Reading

Children spend their first few years in primary school learning to read with books carefully matched to their actual reading level. However, from about eight years onwards, they will read a much wider range of books, increasing their knowledge across all the different subjects they study at school – in other words they use their reading to learn.

Challenges

All children should eventually be able to read to learn and read with enjoyment, fluency, accuracy and understanding. Some children will reach this level by age 11, some children will reach it at a younger age and some children – especially those with additional learning needs – may require more support over a longer period of time to reach this level.

This table shows some of the challenges that deaf children may have when learning language (and to read). It gives examples of ways that you can support your child to overcome them at home.

Challenge	How to help
Using hearing technologies.	<p>Check that hearing technologies are working properly and discuss any problems with your child's audiologist, school or Teacher of the Deaf.</p> <p>Encourage your child to tell you and their teachers immediately if there are problems.</p> <p>For more information about how to check your child's hearing technology:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• read NDCS's booklet <i>Hearing Aids: Information for families</i>,• watch NDCS's video <i>How to use your hearing aid care kit</i> at: www.ndcs.org.uk/videos,• contact your child's audiologist/Teacher of the Deaf,• if your child has a cochlear implant, visit the Ear Foundation's Sounding Board: www.soundingboard.earfoundation.org.uk.
Listening in a poor acoustic environment.	<p>Keep background noise to a minimum.</p> <p>Keep your house 'acoustically (hearing and listening) friendly' by using soft furnishings and surfaces such as carpets and curtains.</p>
Developing their listening skills.	<p>Make sure you are close to your child and in their field of vision when you communicate – this helps to improve sound quality, and your face and body will give visual clues. (The range of hearing aids is about three metres in a good listening environment.)</p>

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Reading

Extra effort to listen may have an impact on their attention and concentration.	<p>Make listening as easy as possible. Don't sit or stand with your back to the light, as your face will be in shadow. Don't sit your child facing the window because they will be looking into bright light. Make sure that the people's faces are visible and in good light to help with lipreading and reading facial expressions.</p> <p>If you are supporting your spoken communication with sign language or gesturing, make sure your child can see everyone in the conversation.</p> <p>Your child might tire quickly after a day at school so if they are not enjoying an activity stop and do something different. Build in short breaks during any learning activity.</p>
Time taken to process information.	<p>Ensure your child has heard what you have asked or told them. Allow them time to consider and respond to the information they receive.</p>
Missing incidental learning.	<p>Hearing children pick up a lot of language from overhearing words used by adults and children and on the television. Your child may not be able to do this so easily so make sure that family members make time for conversation and helping your child to listen and hear more clearly.</p>
Delayed language development.	<p>Set aside time every day to talk with your child about their day, your day or upcoming events.</p> <p>Good-quality interaction will really help them so make sure you won't be disturbed – it's better to have 20 minutes face-to-face time than 45 minutes while you're distracted by trying to do other things.</p>
Difficulty learning and understanding new words.	<p>Don't assume that your child understands all the words that they or you read – check by asking simple questions.</p> <p>Encourage them by reading together every day. To extend their language you can read to them at a higher language level and suggest alternative words.</p>
Difficulty with lipreading sounds that look very similar on the lips (such as b/p/m and f/v) or sounds that have no clear lip patterns (such as /t/, /d/, /n/, k/, /g/).	<p>Use hand shapes to accompany the sound – these are called visual cues (see Appendix 1).</p>
Not picking up the natural rhythm of the language.	<p>It can be harder for deaf children to pick up on the rhythms in language so reading rhyming stories is very helpful. You can then play with the rhyming words and think of other words that rhyme.</p>

Choosing reading materials

At school your child may continue to read a carefully graded book from a published programme but by their final year in primary school they will probably be able to choose any book. They may continue to bring books home on a regular basis – you can help to improve their fluency, accuracy and understanding by listening to their reading. Their class teacher or the Teacher of the Deaf will suggest the best ways to support your child with this.

At this stage in school your child will gradually be introduced to a wider range of reading materials. This will often be done through topics in history, geography and science. These are the different types of reading materials they might use.

- Fiction, for example, adventure, mystery, animal stories, myths and legends.
- Poetry, for example, rhyming, acrostics, limericks, (see Appendix 3).
- Diaries, biographies and autobiographies.
- Information, including:
 - books about different topics and subjects,
 - newspapers and magazines,
 - instructions on how to do something,
 - adverts and brochures,
 - letters and emails.
- Reference reading, including:
 - dictionaries and thesauruses,
 - encyclopaedias,
 - handbooks,
 - internet.

If your child is expected to read most of the content on their own, it should not include language and vocabulary too far in advance of their own. However, reading more advanced material can help children to extend their vocabulary and learn different uses of language, so you could read these materials at home together.

When your child is reading they should understand that it is important to read for meaning and read accurately.

Around this time your child may develop preferences for certain types of reading material. For example, some children prefer non-fiction books. It is important to allow (and encourage) your child to choose books they would like to read. If their reading level isn't advanced enough to read these books you can read to them.

Your local library will have a good selection of both fiction and non-fiction books and most libraries are happy to order books from other libraries if you ask.

Look out for books with deaf characters as they can help to give your child a positive self-image and an understanding of their deafness – ask the Teacher of the Deaf for suggestions or visit the Forest Books website: www.forestbooks.com.

Whatever book your child is reading, it is important that they enjoy it and have access to a range of books.



Reading

Encouraging reading

These tips will help you do simple things to encourage your child to read at home and to enjoy it.

Place and time

- Provide opportunities to sit down and read with few distractions (with the radio and television off).
- Sometimes at night they may be too tired to enjoy reading so find a time that suits you both.



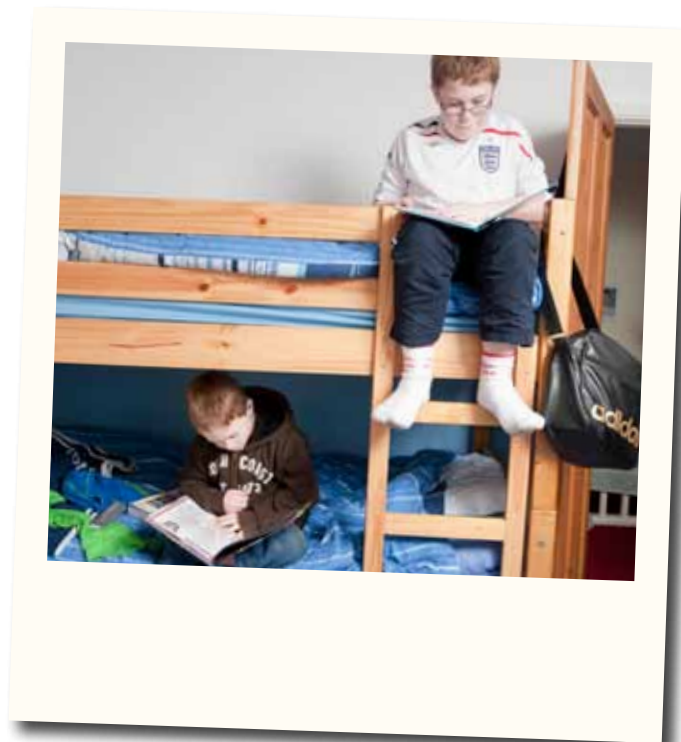
After reading a book

- Ask your child to retell the story in sequence and with extra detail to another family member or friend.
- Act out the story together – you could use props.
- Take it in turn to be a character from the story and ask questions to develop the story more. Start with simple questions and when your child feels more confident ask more challenging questions. For example, in the story *Three Little Pigs* your child could be one of the pigs and you could ask:
 - What is your name?
 - Where do you live?
 - What did you build your house with?
 - Why did you choose straw?
 - How did you feel when the big bad wolf knocked on your door?
 - Why did you say “not by the hair on my chinny chin chin”?
 - What happened to the wolf?

When reading a book

- Take it in turns to read a page or chapter of the book.
- After a chapter talk about what might happen next, or at the end of the story talk about different endings or what might happen next in the characters’ lives.
- Talk about who is telling the story – is it through the eyes of a character, a narrator or the author? Children will begin to understand this if you talk to them about it when you’re reading together.
- If your child is ready, start to talk about the information that is not on the page, such as understanding how a character is feeling because of how they said something (called inference).





Dictionary and thesaurus

It is useful for your child to have a dictionary and child-friendly thesaurus at home and to be helped and encouraged to look up any new words. A thesaurus particularly can help children to expand their vocabulary and make what they say and write more interesting. For example, by looking up “good” in a thesaurus they may find “fantastic”, “extraordinary”, “amazing”, “excellent”, “delightful”, “great” or “brilliant”.

Reading comprehension passages

Your child may bring home reading comprehensions, which are passages of text followed by questions on what they have read. The text could be a short story, an extract from a longer story, an advert, a report or an information text. The questions are to check your child understands what they have read and is beginning to read between the lines of the story. You can help by checking that they have answered the questions and letting the teacher know if your child has any problems.

A mini book club

Read the same book at the same time as your child and at the end of each chapter talk about what you thought of the setting, characters and plot. You could extend this to include a friend and their parent and meet when you have all finished the book. You can make it extra fun with special treats such as popcorn or decorating cupcakes.

Reading to your child

Even when they are reading independently, your child will probably still like having a more challenging book read to them by a parent at bedtime. This is especially important for deaf children, as it will help to develop their language and vocabulary.



Reading

Reading for information

Information books

Your child may become more interested in reading non-fiction books as they progress through the school. They will be covering all sorts of topics in history, geography, science and art, and will often want to know more about what they are learning because they are interested or to help with their homework.

A new topic will often introduce new words so it can be helpful for you to ask their teacher what new topics they will be learning so you can practise new vocabulary together. This can be especially helpful for deaf children who might find it difficult to pick up new or unusual words for the first time in class.

You can help your child to become more independent by encouraging them to use the contents and index pages to find information and the glossary or dictionary if they need a word explaining.

The internet is another source of information for your child, and it also helps them to practise reading. If they are using the internet you should check that the websites they are getting information from are appropriate for their age and language level.

When your child is researching a topic it is important that they read a section of information and note it down *in their own words* instead of copying and doing it straight from the website or book. This will show whether they understand what they have read. You can help with this by asking them to tell you about what they have just read.

Adverts and leaflets

Look at adverts in magazines and talk about the different words that are used to persuade you to buy their product. You can also look at which bits of information are facts and which are opinions.

When visiting different attractions on days out collect leaflets and brochures. Discuss with your child how these brochures show what an attraction has to offer and how they try to persuade people to visit. You can also look at which bits of information are facts and which are opinions.

Holiday brochures

Holiday brochures are another good information source to look at together, especially if you are actually going to book a holiday soon. You can talk about what you need as a family from the holiday, make a list and then read through the brochure checking resorts against your needs.

Magazines, newspapers and news programmes

There are lots of magazines available for children – look through them to see which you think are most suitable. Talk about why they come with free gifts and whether that is the most important part of the magazine (children often want a magazine because of the free gift, not because the stories and information interest them).

Some national newspapers have children's sections at the weekends – you can read these together and discuss why newspapers are important. Newspapers are also available online. Some schools are given free monthly newspapers for children. CBBC *Newsround* is a television news programme for children and is also available online.

Writing

Writing can be split into two main parts.

1. Knowing what words to use to tell the story or deliver information, often called the *content* or *message*. Children need to learn to organise their thoughts and choose the most appropriate words and language (vocabulary, grammar) to make sure their message is understood.
2. Being able to write these words down, which means children need to learn the more technical skills of handwriting, spelling and punctuation.

What is expected by age 11?

- By age 11 your child may be writing in different styles, such as factual reports, creative stories and poems, instructions, reviews and explanations.
- Their ideas will often be developed in interesting ways and organised correctly for the reader.
- Vocabulary choices will be more adventurous and words will be used for effect.
- They will begin to use grammatically complex sentences, which extend meaning.
- Spelling will be generally accurate.
- Full stops, capital letters and question marks will be used correctly, and some children will be using other punctuation such as speech marks, commas and apostrophes within their sentences.
- Their handwriting style should be fluent, joined and legible.



Challenges

Some deaf children – particularly those who find language difficult – may face more challenges in writing than hearing children. This may be in both parts of writing – content and technical skills.

When helping a child with a piece of writing, many adults start by commenting on the handwriting, spelling and punctuation. Children can find this difficult as they will have been focusing on *what* they wanted to say and will not have been so careful about *how* they have written it.

This is particularly relevant for deaf children as their working memory (being able to hold information for a short period of time) can become overloaded as they think about what they want to say and how they want to say it, and then remember it long enough to write it down. This leaves little space to consider correct spelling, grammar and punctuation as well as good handwriting. These aspects are still important, but it's important to get the content right before correcting them.

Talk with your child about what they have written and their ideas – whether they make sense, whether they flow, their choice of language, etc. Then encourage your child to go back over their work checking the spelling, grammar and punctuation. They need to understand that this is an important part of their writing.

You can help to increase your child's confidence in both aspects of writing – these next two sections suggest ways to do this.

Writing

Content

Different type of writing

Your child may often find it quite daunting to be faced with a blank sheet of paper – it is normal to need help getting started. This table shows different types of writing and how you can help your child start them.

Types of writing	How to help
Stories	<p>Discuss the setting (where the story will take place, for example, at the beach, in space, in the jungle, at the park).</p> <p>Discuss the type of story (for example, adventure, mystery, animal and whether there is a twist at the end).</p> <p>Discuss the plot and structure (what will happen in the beginning, middle and end).</p> <p>Discuss the characters (describe how they look and how they behave).</p> <p>If your child communicates in sign language and English is their second language, it may be easier to sign the ideas then write them down in English.</p>
Information leaflets	<p>Discuss the key points your child wants to make in the leaflet, how you can break up the information to make it easy to read and how to make it interesting.</p>
Letters	<p>Discuss the differences between formal and informal letters to families and friends, how to format a letter and what language and style is needed for formal letters and informal letters.</p>
Instructions (for example, how to cook or make something or get somewhere)	<p>Discuss why instructions are needed, what is needed to follow the instructions (for example, equipment, tools, ingredients), what the reader needs to do and how to use pictures and diagrams to help.</p>
Report writing (for example, writing about an animal, a machine, a place or a famous person)	<p>Discuss the title, the content and structure, headings, how to find facts about the subject and use them, and how to use pictures and diagrams.</p>
Newspaper articles/stories	<p>Discuss how to write in the past tense, using eye-catching headlines that say what the article is about, how to use quotes by people in the story and the difference between writing facts and opinions (for example, "Bradford won the game 2-0" is a fact and "Billy Smith did not play as well as he did in the previous game" is an opinion).</p>
Persuasive writing (for example, adverts and speeches)	<p>Discuss what the writing is trying to achieve, who the audience is and how to use persuasive words and phrases, such as "brilliant", "fantastic", "reliable", "delicious", "once-in-a-lifetime chance".</p>

It can be helpful to suggest that your child eases the load on their working memory by:

- making notes during the discussion or
- making a simple plan for their piece of writing.

If your child becomes stuck in the middle of a piece of writing, it can be helpful to ask them to read what they have written so far so you can ask some questions about what they want to happen/say next.

Look out for opportunities to praise your child for their ideas and for what they have written well. Make it clear what you are praising, for example, you might say “I really like the beginning of your story as it is exciting” instead of “That’s good.”

Using interesting language

When your child has put their main ideas down on paper you can help them to think about the words they have used and consider more interesting ways of expressing their ideas.



Using different types of words

By the time they are eight, your child will have been taught about making their writing more interesting by adding adjectives to nouns and adverbs to verbs, as well as using pronouns and conjunctions (see Appendix 2).

However, some children will continue to write very simple sentences – this is particularly the case for some deaf children, especially if they are not very confident with their language skills.

For example, a child might write “The boy ran to the bus stop. The boy did not want to miss the bus.” To encourage your child to make the writing more interesting you could ask them questions about the boy – was he big or little, happy, sad or excited? How did he run? You could also ask questions about the bus stop – was it near or at the end of the road?

With these extra points, your child’s sentences might now say “The *excited*, *little* (adjectives) boy ran *quickly* (adverb) to the *nearest* (adjective) bus stop. The boy did not want to miss the *last* (adjective) bus.”

You could then ask if there is another word to put at the beginning of the second sentence instead of writing “little boy” again and then discuss how you could join the two sentences together. The result might be “The excited, little boy ran quickly to the nearest bus stop *because* (conjunction) *he* (pronoun) did not want to miss the last bus.”

Writing

Figures of speech

At school your child will be introduced to figurative language (or figures of speech), which is used to create even more interest and excitement in their writing. The most common figurative language often compares one thing with another, such as “she was as cool as a cucumber” and “he was as bright as a button.”

This language is not meant to be understood in a literal sense (taking the exact meaning of the words) – for example, people are not always the same temperature as cucumbers! It uses the imagination and gives children new ways of looking at the world by emphasising particular points, for example, if we are very hungry, we often emphasise and exaggerate the hunger by stating that we are “starving”.

A lot of figurative language is passed down through tradition and culture. Deaf children often have limited experience of figurative language and find it hard to use and understand because:

- they do not always pick it up naturally from everyday speech in the way that hearing children do,
- when people are speaking to deaf children they often avoid figurative language so they are easier to understand.

This means that deaf children are often quite literal in their general use of language, which can be even more obvious if they use sign language.

This is an area you can help your child with when they are writing, but you can also introduce figurative words and phrases into everyday speech (for example, when it is raining you could say, “It’s raining cats and dogs!” and explain the meaning).

You can also support your child by creating a ‘figures of speech book’ with pages for the different types. They can add to this over time and then use it for reference.

See Appendix 3 for explanations and examples of common figurative language.



Technical skills

Once your child is happy with the content of what they are writing, you can then look at the spelling, grammar and punctuation together.

Many deaf children need help with word endings and verb tenses throughout primary school, as these are often the parts of words that are most difficult to hear. This table shows the most common challenges and how you can support your child.

Challenge	How to help
Writing unknown words.	Sound out the letters of the words they are trying to write. Use visual clues. Use a dictionary. Get them to try to write the word first before you help them and praise their attempts.
Using verb tenses.	Check they have used the correct tense, for example, “I went” not “I goed.”
Using plurals (words for more than one thing).	Help them to learn the rules for getting the correct plural: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• most words you simply add an “s”• if the word ends in “ch”, “sh”, “s”, “ss”, “x” or “z” add an “es” to the word,• if the word ends in a “y” change the “y” to an “i” and add “es”,• if the word end in an “f” or “fe” change it to “v” and add “es”.
Subject–verb agreement (changing the verb depending on whether the subject is single or plural) and getting the subject, verb and object in the right order.	Many deaf children need support to get the correct word order in sentences. One way to help is to ask “who / does / what?” to show that the words should be in the same order as the question, for example, “the girl / climbed / a tree”.

Writing

Prefixes, suffixes and word endings

Between the ages of 8 and 11, children will be introduced to many common prefixes and suffixes (such as “pre” meaning “before” and “ful” meaning “full of”). This can be difficult for deaf children so it’s really helpful to do some extra work on them (see Appendix 1 for more information on prefixes and suffixes).

For more information

NDCS resource *The Secrets of Words* contains lessons, exercises and games and specifically designed books to help with this area of deaf children’s literacy skills. The resource is written for primary school mainstream teachers so check with the class teacher or the Teacher of the Deaf before using it with your child.

Paragraphs

Your child will be writing longer stories, so they need to start writing in paragraphs. A paragraph is a collection of sentences about the same thing. Collecting sentences into paragraphs makes writing easier to read. Your child may need help with this so you could remind them to:

- start a new line after each paragraph.
- possibly leave a space before starting the next paragraph
- depending on their school’s preference, start the first line of a new paragraph a little way in from the edge of the page (called an indent).

Punctuation

Your child should now be used to using capital letters at the start of sentences and full stops at the end. They will be starting to learn and use question marks, exclamation marks, commas, inverted commas, speech marks and apostrophes. You might need to remind them to check for these punctuation marks when they have done a piece of writing.

As extra practice you could write a short story, report or set of instructions and leave out some of the punctuation – your child can then be the teacher and mark your writing for use of punctuation.

Spelling

If your child brings spellings home you can help them to learn them by asking the class teacher what method they use in the school – for example, they may be:

- learning some spelling rules,
- using a phonic approach (see Appendix 1),
- using a visual approach (for example, looking at the word carefully, covering the word, then trying to write it before checking it to see if they have written it correctly),
- breaking up longer, more complex words into syllables.

If you are helping your child to correct any spelling mistakes you should use the same method as the school uses and also encourage them to use dictionaries and spellcheckers.

They may need to use their spellings to write extended sentences or a short story to show they understand the meaning and can use them correctly. Their spellings could be in a letter pattern or may be topic related but they will get more difficult as they progress through school.

Handwriting and presentation

Your child needs to be able to write legibly in both joined up and printed styles with fluency and speed. It’s really useful for them to practice using their best handwriting at home. If they have written something they are very proud of you could get them to copy it out on special paper with a border and put it up on the wall.

Encouraging your child's writing

Your child will begin to understand that writing is both essential to thinking and learning, and enjoyable. They will learn the main rules of written English and start to explore how the English language can be used to show meaning in different ways. They will use planning, drafting and editing to improve their work. These tips will help you to encourage your child to write.

- Speak to your child through journals or a diary where you can share your special thoughts. You could also start a family journal where everyone writes their thoughts and feelings including notes, poems, short stories, photos and drawings.
- Ask your child to write a book review after reading a book, and share it with family or friends.
- Your child could have a pen friend (a friend, cousin or other relative they don't see very often). They can write to each other regularly, sharing news about their lives.
- Writing postcards is popular with many children – you can buy postcards at lots of attractions and encourage your child to send a postcard to a relative or friend to tell them about their day out.
- Your child can write emails to relatives or friends from school.
- Look out for any story-writing competitions – these are sometimes run by libraries or bookshops, etc.
- Your child could write a picture book or a short story for a younger sibling, cousin or friend. Talk to them about what type of stories they like to give them ideas.
- Ask your child to write a set of instructions for a favourite game, recipe or art activity and share them with friends.
- During a school holiday you and your child could do a mini project on a subject of their choice – for example, football, Tudors or wild animals. – using information books, encyclopaedias and the internet. Reinforce some of the features of information books by using pictures, writing captions and using headings, page numbers and a contents page.
- Your child could write a review for other children about one of the attractions they have visited. Help them plan it, decide what categories need to be included and think about what is important to know about an attraction before you visit.
- Your child will probably be starting to give their opinion about things, so this is a good time to talk about facts and opinions. Using information books is a useful way to do this, for example, a fact is “acorns grow on oak trees”.
- Set them a challenge of finding five facts you didn't know about a certain topic or make a fact file about the topic.



Activities and games

Helping with homework

Your child will be given more homework at school every year. You can support them by making time every evening for them to sit quietly and complete their homework with no distractions. Be there for them if they need support but let them try and complete homework themselves.

Encourage them to check their homework before you check it. Remember that it is fine for them to make mistakes – it is important for your child's teacher to know if they need more support with something.

Computers and television

You can help your child to develop their reading and writing skills and other areas of learning with educational computer games and CD-ROMs. Using the internet with your child can encourage them to find information about subjects they are interested in.

Touch-screen computers, such as tablets, have fun apps such as interactive stories, matching games and dressing up characters that can help your child develop new skills.

It is important to check that any software is suitable and does not rely on sounds that your child will not be able to hear. If your child has some hearing, they may benefit from using a direct audio input lead with their hearing aids or cochlear implant – the audiologist or Teacher of the Deaf can give advice on this.

Your child will probably be familiar with subtitles for television programmes and DVDs as they make progress with their reading. It is a great opportunity for them to practise their reading and also good for the rest of the family to get used to subtitles being on screen.



Time for play

Although reading and writing are very important skills, playing with your child and letting them develop and learn through their play is also very important. Make sure you leave enough time to relax, play and enjoy each other's company.

Your child will still enjoy activities such as cooking, creating art projects, gardening, singing and dancing, dressing up, playing outside and playing board and other turn-taking games. These are all valuable and fun ways to spend time.

Remember that every experience is a language experience for your child.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Phonics

Many children learn to read and write through phonics teaching from an early age. Most phonics teaching in schools happens from the ages of four to seven years. However, it is possible that some children aged over seven years, particularly those with a delay in their language, will need to continue to work on developing their skills in phonics.

What is phonics?

Phonics is a set of basic skills used when teaching reading and writing. At its simplest, phonics means seeing a letter on the page and making its sound when you say it, for example, knowing that the letter “a” will have the sound /a/ as in “apple” or “ant”.

All 26 letters in the English alphabet have their own sound, but the English language has more sounds than letters in the alphabet so as well as the 26 letters of the alphabet your child needs to learn:

- the 44 sounds made when letters are written in groups of two or more (such as “sh”, “ou”, “ear”) and the skills of:
 - ❖ how to say the sounds in the order they appear in the word and how to put these sounds together (blend) to say the word (for example, the sounds /d/ then /o/ and then /g/ blended to give the word “dog”)
 - ❖ how to break words down into sounds to write and spell words.

How do phonics help my child?

Phonics will help your child to work out new words when reading and to choose the right letters for the sounds in words when writing. For example, if a young child comes across the word “shop” for the first time they will try to read it by breaking it down into its three sounds – /sh/, /o/ and /p/ – and then blend these sounds together to say the word – this is called decoding. If they were asked to write the word they would break it down into its sounds and write the letter or letters that represent each sound that they hear – “sh”, “o” and “p” – this is called encoding.

Phonics is generally accepted (and supported by research) as an important key skill in learning to read and write for the majority of children, including deaf children.

Ensuring deaf children benefit from phonics

Most schools will use a particular phonics programme, which will be largely appropriate for most deaf children. However, success in phonics does depend on the child hearing the different sounds – a deaf child will not be able to hear the sounds as clearly and easily as hearing children.

It is important that before any phonics teaching session, teachers:

- ensure the child’s hearing technology is working,
- provide a listening/teaching space that is good for listening,
- be aware of the impact of the child’s level of deafness on learning sounds (for example, sounds that might be difficult for your child to hear even with their hearing aids or cochlear implants, sounds that are difficult to differentiate through speech reading, etc.).

Teachers of the Deaf will often recommend using visual prompts, called visual cueing systems. There are several different systems but they all work on the same principle – as the letter sound is said, a specific hand shape or movement is made for that sound. The combination of hearing the sound and seeing the hand shape or movement can help the child to identify which sound is being said. This is particularly helpful for letters that have no clear lip movements (t / d / n / k / g) and for letters that have similar lip patterns (p / b / m and f / v). Some systems such as Jolly Phonics (www.communication4all.co.uk/Phonics/JIP%20action%20Sheets.pdf) use an action to represent each sound – this is called cued speech or cued articulation.

Check with the class teacher whether a visual cueing system or any other specific strategies are being used.

For more information

Read NDCS’s factsheet *Using Phonics to Develop your Child’s Reading and Writing Skills*.

Appendices

Appendix 2: Terms used in writing

By the time your child is eight they should have been taught some ways of making their writing more interesting – this will include using:

- nouns – names of things or people, for example, chair, rabbit, beach,
- pronouns – used instead of a noun to avoid repetition, for example, he, she, it, we, they,
- verbs – action or doing words, for example, run, sleep, eat,
- adjectives – describe things or people, for example, beautiful, happy, green,
- adverbs – describe verbs, for example, quietly, shyly, quickly,
- prepositions – relate one thing to another, for example, to, at, in, of, after, with, on,
- conjunctions – join words or sentences together, for example, and, but, for, so, because,
- articles – a, an, the,
- connectives – used to link one sentence to another or to extend a sentence, for example, while, therefore, however, so, and, although, besides, but, since, then.

Prefixes and suffixes

A prefix is added in front of a word to change its meaning.

Prefix	Word	Combined word
Un	Able	unable
Dis	Appear	disappear
Re	Turn	return
De	Code	decode
In	Side	inside

A suffix is added to the end of a word to form a new word, for example, adding:

- "ed" to words such as "end" or "kick" to describe the past tense (things that have happened previously),
- "s" or "es" to indicate more than one, such as "girl(s)" and "success(es)",
- "ful" to indicate "full of", such as "care(ful)" and "success(ful)".

Some deaf children find it hard to use and understand prefixes and suffixes. They may miss the ending of words, especially the softer sounding "s" and "es". You can ask your child's school how they are introducing children to prefixes and suffixes so you can practise it with your child.

Appendix 3: Figures of speech

Some language is not meant to be interpreted by its most basic meaning (literally) – this is called figurative speech. It is a way of understanding that uses the imagination and provides new ways of looking at the world. These are examples of different types of figurative speech.

Similes

“She worked like a busy bee.”

Similes say that a person, place, animal or thing is like something else – they always use the words ‘as’ or ‘like’.

→ “Hands as cold as ice.”

→ “Eyes like diamonds.”

→ “Hair like gold.”

→ “Walking as slow as a snail.”

→ “Slept like a log.”

Metaphor

“All the world is a stage.”

Metaphors are similar to similes but to have more of an impact they say that an object *is* something else, not *is like it*.

→ “Her hair was silk.”

→ “The house was an oven.”

→ “He is a brick.”

Personification

“Time never waits for anyone.”

Personification is when a non-living object or an abstract concept is given human qualities.

→ “The stars danced across the sky.”

→ “The snowdrops shivered in

the cold icy mist.”

→ “This necklace is an old friend.”

→ “The wind roared down the chimney.”

Alliteration

“Sally sells slippery eels.”

Alliteration means to use the same or similar beginning sounds in two or more words in a row or close together. It is often used in poetry writing and tongue twisters:

→ “The **s**pecial **s**oldier **s**tamped his feet **s**teadily to the **s**ound of the drum.”

→ “**P**eter **P**iper **p**icked a **p**eck of **p**ickled **p**epper.”

→ “**S**he sells sea **s**hells on the sea **s**hore.”

→ “**B**ertie, the **b**ig, **b**old, **b**rown dog **b**arked menacingly.”

Onomatopoeia

“Plop, fizz, bang.”

Onomatopoeia means using words that sound like their meaning.

→ “Buzz.” → “Sizzle.”

→ “Hiss.” → “Woof.”

Idioms

“It’s raining cats and dogs.”

Idioms are words or phrases that mean something different from the words that they are made up from. For example, “Pull your weight” means contributing a fair amount to a task and not pulling something that weighs the same as you.

→ “Raining cats and dogs” means raining heavily.

→ “Under the weather” means feeling unwell.

→ “Sleep on it” means think about it overnight.

→ “Keep your chin up” means keep positive and be happy.

→ “Banging your head against a wall” means being frustrated.

Poetry

Acrostic poem

An acrostic poem uses the letters in a word to begin each line of the poem – all lines of the poem will be about that word.

Marvellous and swinging
Only in the jungle
Nut munching and chomping
King of the trees
Everyday is funny with monkeys
Yummy bananas in their tummys

Limerick

A limerick is a poem that has five lines and has a specific rhyming pattern. Lines 1, 2, and 5 have 7–10 syllables and rhyme and lines 3 and 4 have 5–7 syllables and rhyme. They are often very funny!

There once was a python called Jake,
He was a great big long snake,
He ate a small goat,
And got a sore throat,
Oh what a silly mistake!

Resources and organisations

The National Deaf Children's Society (NDCS)

NDCS has a range of publications and resources that can help your child develop language and early literacy skills. Sign up for free membership to order all our resources for free:

- online at **www.ndcs.org.uk**
- by phoning NDCS's Freephone Helpline on 0800 800 8880 (voice and text)
- by emailing helpline@ndcs.org.uk.

NDCS's Family Sign Language website is for families of deaf children who want to use British Sign Language. It teaches the signs and phrases needed for nursery rhymes, stories and playing make-believe games as well as the tools for practical communication about important topics, such as food, sleeping and nappy changing. Find out more at:

www.familysignlanguage.org.uk

These organisations give information about resources suitable for deaf children. Don't forget that you can make your own free and fun games and activities at home that can be equally enjoyable.

BBC website

A very good website for children, with some fun games and activities about learning to read and write. Be careful when choosing activities to turn off any background music that detracts from the clarity of sounds especially in phonic games.

www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/ks2

Communication for All

A website that contains worksheets to help support your child's reading and writing.

www.communication4all.co.uk

Forest Books

Forest Books sells books and other resources about deafness and deaf issues. It has books, videos and CD-ROMs suitable for deaf children, and resources for people learning sign language.

Telephone: 01594 833 858 (voice and text)

Fax: 01594 833 446

forest@forestbooks.com

www.forestbooks.com

Letterbox Library

Letterbox Library sells story and reference books for children who are dealing with difficult and confusing issues. Books cover subjects such as divorce, a death in the family, bullying or being made to feel 'different', and help children understand what is happening and find positive ways of coping.

Telephone: 020 7503 4801 (voice)

Fax: 020 7503 4800

info@letterboxlibrary.com

www.letterboxlibrary.com

Smart Play Network (Scotland)

Smart Play Network is the support organisation for toy libraries and play resource projects in Scotland.

Telephone: 0131 664 2746

www.smartplaynetwork.org

Orchard Toys

Orchard Toys sells games and toys online and in most toyshops.

www.orchardtoys.com

Stories in the Air CD-ROM

This CD-ROM teaches 120 basic British Sign Language signs and is divided by topic.

www.learnbsl.org

NDCS provides the following services through our membership scheme. Registration is simple, fast and free to parents and carers of deaf children and professionals working with them. Contact the Freephone Helpline (see below) or register through www.ndcs.org.uk

- A Freephone Helpline 0808 800 8880 (voice and text) offering clear, balanced information on many issues relating to childhood deafness, including schooling and communication options.
- A range of publications for parents and professionals on areas such as audiology, parenting and financial support.
- A website at www.ndcs.org.uk with regularly updated information on all aspects of childhood deafness and access to all NDCS publications.
- A team of family officers who provide information and local support for families of deaf children across the UK.
- Specialist information, advice and support (including representation at hearings if needed) from one of our appeals advisers in relation to the following types of tribunal appeals: education (including disability discrimination, special educational needs (SEN) and, in Scotland, Additional Support for Learning (ASL)); and benefits.
- An audiologist and technology team to provide information about deafness and equipment that may help deaf children.
- Technology Test Drive – an equipment loan service that enables deaf children to try out equipment at home or school
- Family weekends and special events for families of deaf children.
- Sports, arts and outdoor activities for deaf children and young people.
- A quarterly magazine and regular email updates.
- An online forum for parents and carers to share their experiences, at www.ndcs.org.uk/parentplace.
- A website for deaf children and young people to get information, share their experiences and have fun www.buzz.org.uk.

NDCS is the leading charity dedicated to creating a world without barriers for deaf children and young people.

NDCS Freephone Helpline:
0808 800 8880 (voice and text)

Email: helpline@ndcs.org.uk

www.ndcs.org.uk

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