

# Helping your deaf child to read and write

**For parents with a  
5-7 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 second 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 3–4, especially if your child has just turned 5.

It contains two main sections:

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

At the end you'll find activities you can do with your child, further information on phonics and wordlists and information about organisations and resources that can support you.

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.

When your child begins their formal education at primary school, they will follow particular programmes to develop their literacy skills. You can talk to their class teacher and Teacher of the Deaf about how you can support your child and help them with any challenges. It is a good idea to ask your child's class teacher what they are learning in class so you can support this at home.

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 and experiences of developing their child's language, reading and writing on NDCS's Parent Place forum: [www.ndcs.org.uk/parentplace](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/parentplace).

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

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

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# 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.

When your child is between five and seven years old, they are likely to become more confident in speaking or signing and listening to others. They will begin to read and write independently, with enthusiasm. They will also start to use language to explore their own experiences and imaginary worlds.



Deaf children find it harder than hearing children to learn the English language so anything that you do at home to support them to learn language will be really helpful. These tips will help you to do this.

- Build opportunities for conversation and discussion into everyday activities, for example, shopping, cooking or gardening.
- Play games that give the chance for discussion 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.



Visual prompts can also help you support your child to learn new words. They can be anything from a picture, a photograph or a real-life object that will help your child to visualise what is being spoken about. They can be useful to help with new words that you have no meaningful way of describing. You can find images to support learning by searching on the internet. Real-life experiences can provide useful visual prompts as well. For example, if a story talks about “the bustle of a market” or “the waves crashing onto rocks”, seeing or experiencing these things will help your child understand the language.

The booklet for parents of 3–4 year olds explained how to overcome some difficulties that deaf children can have when they are developing language skills. Most of this information is suitable for older children, although their language will become more sophisticated. This booklet also contains tips on how to:

- help your child continue to develop their language,
- support them in reading and writing,
- look out for potential issues to be aware of.



# Reading

We read for many reasons, including for pleasure. If your child sees you reading a lot they will start to realise how important it is. Take opportunities to read as much as possible – such as books, newspapers, magazines, emails, menus or instructions.

When your child starts school they will begin to learn to read, building on what they learned in their early years setting. By the age of seven they should be reading with more fluency, accuracy, understanding and enjoyment.

Reading the words in a book does not necessarily mean that a child understands the story or information so it is important that all children are taught to read for meaning and pleasure.

## What does reading involve?

Reading is gaining meaning from written or printed text. This means that your child needs to be able to:

- recognise the words on the page,
- know the meaning of these words,
- use their own knowledge and experience to understand the sentences that the words form.



There are two main ways a child will learn to read and identify the words on a page:

1. phonics
2. sight reading.

## Phonics

Phonics is the relationship between the letter you see on a page and the sound that it makes when you say it. This means, for example, knowing that the letter “a” will have the sound /a/ as in “apple” or “ant”. The word “dog” is made up of three sounds: /d/ /o/ /g/. Knowing the letter sounds will help your child to say words they have not seen before when reading and to choose the right letters for the sounds in words when writing. More information about phonics can be found in Appendix 1.

## Sight reading

Sight reading is when a word is learned as a whole word – the child memorises the word by remembering how it looks.

Most children are taught to read through phonics. However, each deaf child is different and may be taught in different ways depending on their levels of hearing and signing (if used). You can ask your child’s class teacher and Teacher of the Deaf about the approach they are using with your child.



## Challenges

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"> <li>• read NDCS's booklet <i>Hearing Aids: Information for families</i></li> <li>• watch NDCS's video <i>How to use your hearing aid care kit</i> at <a href="http://www.ndcs.org.uk/videos">www.ndcs.org.uk/videos</a></li> <li>• contact your child's audiologist/Teacher of the Deaf</li> <li>• if your child has a cochlear implant, visit the Ear Foundation's Sounding Board at <a href="http://www.soundingboard.earfoundation.org.uk">www.soundingboard.earfoundation.org.uk</a>.</li> </ul>
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>
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. 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>

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# Reading

Time taken to process information.	Ensure your child has heard what you have asked or told them. Allow them time to consider and respond to the information they receive.
Missing incidental learning.	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.
Delayed language development.	Set aside time every day to talk with your child about their day, your day or upcoming events. Good-quality interaction will really help them.
Difficulty learning and understanding new words.	Don't assume that your child understands all the words that they or you read – check by asking simple questions.
Difficulty with phonics.	If your child lipreads they may find it harder to develop phonics skills. Use hand shapes or gestures to accompany sounds – these are called visual cues.

## Learning to read

In the early stages of learning to read, there is a lot you can do to help to help your child

### Sounds of the language

To get the most from phonics teaching, it is important that your child can identify the sounds of the spoken language.

When you hear a foreign language being spoken for the first time it is often difficult to work out where the individual words begin and end – children learning English are in a similar situation. You can help your child by asking them to:

- clap once (softly) for each word they can hear in a sentence (start with three or four words in a sentence and gradually add more),
- when they can do this most of the time ask them to clap once (softly) for each syllable they can hear in a single word – for example, “cat” has one syllable, “weekend” has two syllables (week-end), “writing” has two syllables (writ-ing), “carefully” has three syllables (care-ful-ly). You could start with the syllables in your child’s name and those of your family,
- when they can do this focus on a single word again and ask them to clap once (softly) for each letter sound they can hear in that word (at this stage it is best to keep to three and four letter words, such as “hot”, “bat”, “slip”, “camp”, etc).

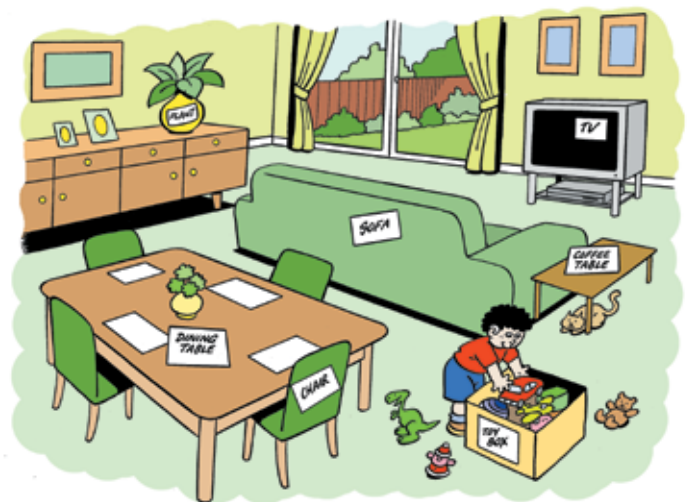
Being able to identify how many syllables and letters are in a word will really help your child when they start to sound out words to read and write. Deaf children often need much more practice in these activities than hearing children. Your child’s class teacher or Teacher of the Deaf can provide you with advice and support on how you can help with this.

## Letters and sounds

At school your child will be starting to learn the sounds made by different letters of the alphabet. Most schools will introduce one or two letters a week and will tell you what the letters are. Some schools teach letter sounds and names at the same time; others teach only the sounds at first. It is important to check what your child is being taught so you can support this.

These tips will help you support your child to learn letters and sounds.

- Practise the same letter sounds, and names if appropriate, when they bring these home.
- Put a copy of these letters up at home somewhere they will see them every day.
- Make an alphabet scrapbook and add to it every week. You could draw or cut out and stick in different things beginning with the letters, using old catalogues, magazines, etc.
- Label different objects around the home that begin with the letters.
- Play I Spy with the letter sounds.



# Reading

## High frequency and tricky words

Sometimes your child may bring home a reading book and a list of words to be learnt by sight reading. These may be called ‘high frequency’ or ‘tricky’ words.

High frequency words are used a lot in the English language. Some of them can’t be sounded out by using phonics so have to be learnt as whole words, such as “the”, “you”, “this” and “are”.

A fun and simple way to help your child practise high frequency or tricky words is to play Word Lotto:

1. Make two simple lotto boards with each word written out (see Appendix 1 for example words) and a set of word cards with the same words written on them.
2. Take it in turns to pick a card and read it.
3. If you or your child pick up a word that is on your lotto board put the word card on top.
4. You can play by winning if you complete a line of words on the board or by being the first person to get all the words on their board.

This game will help children recognise these words more quickly *after* they have been learned. Schools teach them in a different order so make sure you know what words are being introduced to your child’s class.



## Reading books

A simple and important way to help your child with reading is to read together. Remember that if your child lipreads they will need to see your face and the story at the same time.

Try and make reading books together fun. Change the tone of your voice throughout the story as appropriate and use different voices for different characters. Use your face to tell the story and show the feelings of the characters with your expressions.

When you are reading books together you can take turns to read, for example, by changing for each page of the story. Encourage your child to tell you if they do not know a word in the book. Make sure you talk about what it means; as they get more confident they could look up the meaning in a picture dictionary.

Reading different books at home, not just the book they get from school, will really help your child. Try to get a range of books that you can read together for different purposes, especially for pleasure.

These could include:

- stories, such as traditional tales, modern stories, fantasy stories, fairy tales, myths and legends,
- poetry,
- information books and reference materials, such as encyclopaedias, dictionaries, CD-roms, the internet and magazines.

Your local library will have a good selection of books and most libraries can 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](http://www.forestbooks.com).

It is important that the books you read to your child are at a higher language level than they use so they can learn new words and vocabulary.



You can also make your own experience books – buy a blank book for writing about different topics, such as family, hobbies, holidays and places your child has visited, and stick photos and pictures in. Experience books are fun and interesting, and are a great way to encourage conversation, language development, creativity and writing.

Your child may still enjoy reading some of the books they liked when they were younger – don't think that they must always read new or more challenging stories. Reading familiar stories will help them continue to enjoy books.

It's a great idea to keep a book or two in your bag as you never know when you may have a spare 10 minutes to read together. You can read at any time of day, although your child may be tired at bedtime and prefer you to read to them.



# Reading

## Story books (fiction)

These tips will help you to support your child with reading and enjoying fiction books. You don't have to do them all, but you can pick the ones you think your child will enjoy.

- During a story ask your child questions to make sure they understand. These can be about the characters' actions or feelings or what they think might happen next.
- If your child hasn't understood a sentence encourage them to go back and read it again, or read the next sentence to see if this helps, before you explain what it meant.
- At the end of the story talk about which parts your child enjoyed and why. Discuss whether there was anything they didn't like and why and what they would change about the story.
- Play an active role in talking about the story as your child will learn from you during these discussions.
- Make a character picture book – draw a favourite character from a story and all around the picture write words that describe what they look like and their personality. Over time you could build these up to make a book about your child's favourite story characters.
- Ask your child to retell the story to another family member. You could photocopy the pictures from the story so they can use them as prompts.
- Act out the story together either using toys or taking the roles as the main characters yourselves.
- Talk about stories having beginnings where the setting, characters and story plot are introduced, a middle where the main action of the story takes place and an ending where the story is concluded. You could make up an alternative ending to some of the stories you have read 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). This is a difficult skill so they may need a lot of support at first.
- Poetry books – especially ones with rhyming limericks – are great as they are short, will make your child laugh and include lots of rhyme.



## Information books (non-fiction)

You don't always have to read stories with your child. Many children love information books, particularly on a subject that they are really interested in. If your child has recently been on an outing or is learning about a particular topic at school they may enjoy information books about this.

When reading information books with your child encourage them to use the contents and index page to look up information and the glossary if they need a word explaining.

During a school holiday you and your child could make a mini project on a subject of their choice – for example, aeroplanes, cats or ballet – 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. You could set them a challenge of finding five facts you didn't know about a certain topic or make a fact file about the topic.

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” and an opinion is “oak trees have the most unusual shaped leaves”.



# Writing

Your child will probably already enjoy writing and on starting school may be able to write their name or the first letter of it. They might have helped you at home with writing shopping lists, relatives' cards or birthday invitations. They will also be learning to write the letter for the sound they are learning to read, for example, 'a' is for 'apple', 'c' is for 'cat'.

To able to write, your child will need to know how to:

- explain information or tell a story (the content),
- organise their thoughts and choose the most appropriate words and language (vocabulary, grammar),
- write these thoughts down.

They will also need to learn the physical skills of handwriting and spelling to be able to write.



To learn to write in an interesting but grammatically correct way your child will need to be able to use:

- 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.

## Challenges

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

Challenge	How to help
Writing unknown words.	Sound out the letters of the words they are trying to write. Use visual clues. Use a picture dictionary. Get them to try to write it first before you help them and praise their attempts.
Using verb tenses/adding tenses to verbs, for example, "He <i>helped</i> the old man cross the road" not "He <i>help</i> the old man cross the road".	Check they have used the correct tense, for example, "I went" not "I goed." Help your child to learn the rules to get the correct tense by practising adding 'ed' to the ends of words.
Using plurals (words for more than one thing).	Be aware that many deaf children find word endings hard to hear, for example, "s" "es". Help them to learn the rules for getting the correct plural: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• most words you simply add an "s"</li> <li>• if the word ends in "ch", "sh", "s", "ss", "x" or "z" add an "es" to the word</li> <li>• if the word ends in a "y" change the "y" to an "i" and add "es"</li> <li>• if the word end in an "f" or "fe" change it to "v" and add "es".</li> </ul>
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".
Having a limited vocabulary.	Encourage your child to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• understand and use more interesting words,</li> <li>• use adjectives to describe things and people,</li> <li>• use adverbs to describe the way people do things.</li> </ul>
Having a limited sentence structure.	Your child may need encouragement to write more than very basic sentences. For example, if they wrote "James fell over" you could suggest they add more detail, such as "As James was running he fell over and hurt his knees."

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# Writing

Difficulty getting started – writer’s block when faced with a blank sheet of paper.	<p>Provide different opportunities for small writing tasks, for example, shopping lists.</p> <p>Sometimes let your child concentrate on telling you the content while you write it down for them.</p> <p>Talk about a possible story together before they write it down – agree a first sentence together and then ask what might come next.</p> <p>Praise all their attempts and don’t expect long pieces of writing at first.</p> <p>If your child communicates in sign language and English is their second language, it may be easier to sign the ideas and then write them down in English.</p>
Producing good handwriting.	<p>At first when your child is concentrating on the content and spelling it is unlikely that they will produce their best handwriting so don’t worry if it’s a bit messy.</p>

## Encouraging writing

You can help your child with writing at home by giving them lots of opportunities to write and praising them when they write letters correctly.

Over time they will need to start writing letters of the same size, from left to right and from top to bottom of a page. They will learn to put letters together to make words and to leave spaces between each word. They may start joining letters together from the beginning or may need some practice. Ask their teacher how they are being taught to write at school.

Even though they will be learning to write letters, it’s really useful for them to write for pleasure using their own style – this is called “emergent writing”. They will make marks on paper, perhaps including some recognisable letters, but it will mostly look like lines and squiggles. This lets them be more creative while they learn to write letters and words correctly.



These tips will help you encourage your child to enjoy writing.

- Ask your child to write thank you notes and letters to friends and family, shopping lists or menus for family dinners or a list of things you need to take on holiday.
- 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.
- Make your own experience books – buy a blank book for writing about different topics, such as family, hobbies, holidays and places your child has visited, and stick photos and pictures in. The pictures will tell the story and you can both add sentences below each of the pictures.
- Have a story circle – sit in a small circle with your child and a few other people and say or write a few sentences of a story each. Keep passing the story around the circle until someone makes up an ending.
- Write stories, poems and raps together. Take turns to think of words that rhyme or look alike, like “cat, hat, mat, bat, and pat”.
- Put labels around the home – your child will quickly learn what letters make up the words such as “fridge”, “toilet” and “bed”. if they see the word every time they use the item. This is a great way to help children associate words with objects and to extend their vocabulary.
- Practise finding little words in big words (called anagrams), such as “scarecrow” where you could find row, are, cow, rare, care or sew.
- Draw an outline of your child on a large piece of paper, cut it out and label their body parts
- Write notes and leave them around the house or in their lunchbox for them to find.
- Make story strips – divide an event or activity in your child’s life, such as going swimming, into five or six parts and draw these on a piece of card with lines dividing each part. Use this to tell the story and when your child is confident enough ask them to write the story under the pictures.

# Writing

## Spelling

Another way to help your child with writing is to support them to learn spellings at home. At first children are taught words in groups of similar spellings, called 'letter strings', such as "man, van, can" or "train, brain, rain".

When spellings become more complicated and cannot be written the way they sound, some children find the 'look, say, cover, write and check' technique helpful. This means they:

1. look at the word
2. say it
3. cover it up
4. try spelling it
5. check to see if they were right.

They can practise each word about five times. As they get more confident you can ask them to write each word in a sentence to show they understand what it means. You could also suggest they make up a silly short story using all their words.

Your child will start to notice that some words have the same sound but different spellings and meanings, for example, "pair" and "pear", "rain" and "reign" or "night" and "knight" – these are called 'homonyms'. If these words come up, talk about them and maybe start writing them all down in a list. You could set your child a challenge to see how many homonyms they can think of.

## Prefixes and suffixes

At school your child will be taught how to use 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.

## Sentence structure and grammar

Your child will start to learn how to write grammatically correct sentences at school. At first children often write a sentence as they say or sign it, so they need to learn how to form correct written sentences using the different types of words (see page 14).

If your child has written a story, make sure you praise it before you suggest any changes to their grammar. Encourage them to use capital letters at the start of sentences, full stops at the end and questions marks if appropriate.

Another way to help them think about grammar is to write a short story yourself and then ask them to be the teacher and check it for capital letters or full stops.

## Content

These tips will help you encourage your child to think about the words they are writing and how to make them more interesting.

- When your child is writing you can talk about which words they choose and explain that there are different words that mean the same thing, for example, “big”, “large”, “huge”, “gigantic”, “great”, “enormous”. These are called synonyms and are important because they can add variety to writing and very slightly change the meaning of a sentence.
- If you feel your child is ready, you could get them a thesaurus so they can look up words and find lots of other alternatives.
- Look at adjectives and adverbs together to help to expand their vocabulary – talk about family members or a toy and think of different words to describe them.
- The game Guess Who? is a fun way to use different adjectives.
- Explore adverbs by talking about how different people do things, such as describing how family members eat their dinner or walk to school.



# Activities and games

## Computers

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.

There are lots of fun websites and online games that you can use with your child to develop their reading and writing – ask your child's school and Teacher of the Deaf about finding ones for their age group. Visit the BBC website for some fun games and activities about learning to read and write: [www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/ks1](http://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/ks1). Be careful to turn off any background music that detracts from the clarity of sounds especially in phonic games.

## Television

It is a good idea to introduce your child to subtitles on 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.

## Play and learning

Playing with your child and letting them develop and learn through play is important, even as they get older. You can help to develop and extend your child's language through play, which will support them with their reading and writing. This will give them a greater richness of language and help them to understand how new words are used. Play also helps children to develop their imagination.

Your child will still enjoy playing many games that they played when they were younger, as well as being ready to move on to more challenging ones. They will enjoy playing independently with their friends without having to have an adult to support them. Over the page are some simple games and activities that your child may enjoy.





## Memory game

This game helps to develop memory and think about words associated with a certain topic. Each person takes it in turns to say “I went to the shop and I bought...” listing all the items that have been said before. You can play it in alphabetical order or use different shops such as a bakery, clothes shop or supermarket.

## Role play everyday experiences

Role play helps children to learn new words to use in different situations and see how people might react to what they say. Think of different situations you can role play together and take it in turns to be the different characters, such as doctor and patient. Here are some ideas for places you could pretend to be:

- supermarket
- toy shop
- pizza restaurant
- doctors
- camping
- train station
- shoe shop
- hairdressers
- vets
- petrol station
- teddy bears’ picnic
- safari.

## Build a den

Building a den can help children to play imaginatively and make up different situations. Plan with your child what you think you need to build a den, collect all the items and then build it together. They can play inside developing imaginary situations and role play.

## Taking turns

Playing games that involve taking turns can help children learn to be patient and wait for their turn as well as thinking about what the other person might do next. Games include Junior Scrabble, Party Party Party! or Junior Monopoly.

## Crafts

Making jewellery, sewing and knitting together is a great way to spend time together and chat while learning something new and producing something that your child will be proud of. Necklaces, bracelets, bags, soft toys or scarves all make great presents for family and friends.

## Activities around the home

Your child may really enjoy activities such as cooking, creating art projects, gardening, singing and dancing, dressing up and playing games. They are fun but also give you a chance to spend time together chatting about different topics and developing their vocabulary.

## Lego

Building Lego models and playing with them can help your child follow instructions as well as use their imagination and creativity. They can build models from the bricks or use Lego City or Lego Friends to further extend play.

## Who am I?

This game helps children to think about how to ask questions to find out what they want to know and make links between facts.

1. Write names of some characters, for example, Mickey Mouse or Cinderella, on sticky notes and take it in turns to pick one (make sure you can’t see the name on the one you picked).
2. Stick it on your forehead so the other person can see the name and take it in turns to ask questions to try to guess who you are (questions must be ones that can be answered with yes or no).

# Appendices

## Appendix 1: 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 (“sh”, “ou”, “ear”, etc) 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 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 levels 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 and reading).

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/JP%20action%20Sheets.pdf](http://www.communication4all.co.uk/Phonics/JP%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*.

## Appendix 2: Wordlists

The wordlists are the essential high-frequency words that are taught as sight reading for children aged five to seven. They are all words that children will need to form even the simplest sentences. Some have irregular or difficult spellings and can be hard to predict from surrounding text so it is important that children can read these words both in and out of context.

### First 45 words

a	cat	he	my	they
all	come	I	no	this
am	dad	in	of	to
and	day	is	on	up
are	dog	it	play	was
at	for	like	said	we
away	get	look	see	went
big	go	me	she	yes
can	going	mum	the	you

### Next 150 words

about	door	little	over	took
after	down	live(d)	people	tree
again	first	love	push	two
an	from	made	pull	us
another	girl	make	put	very
as	good	man	ran	want
back	got	many	saw	water
ball	had	may	school	way
be	half	more	seen	were
because	has	much	should	what
bed	have	must	sister	when
been	help	name	so	where
boy	her	new	some	who
brother	here	next	take	will
but	him	night	than	with
by	his	not	that	would
call(ed)	home	now	their	your
came	house	off	them	
can't	how	old	then	
could	if	once	there	
did	jump	one	these	
do	just	or	three	
don't	last	our	time	
dig	laugh	out	too	

### Extra words

- Days of the week
- Months of the year
- Numbers up to 20
- Common colour words
- Child's name and address
- Name and address of school

# 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](http://www.ndcs.org.uk)
- by phoning NDCS's Freephone Helpline on 0800 800 8880 (voice and text)
- by emailing [helpline@ndcs.org.uk](mailto: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](http://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.

## **Auditory Verbal UK**

A national charity providing auditory verbal services including intensive, family-based support to enable babies and young children who are deaf to listen and talk.

Telephone: 01869 321429

[info@avuk.org](mailto:info@avuk.org)

[www.avuk.org](http://www.avuk.org)

## **Communication for All**

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

[www.communication4all.co.uk](http://www.communication4all.co.uk)

## **Cued Speech**

A national charity that provides information, advice, courses and learning materials about cued speech.

Telephone: 01803 832784

[info@cuedspeech.co.uk](mailto:info@cuedspeech.co.uk)

[www.cuedspeech.co.uk](http://www.cuedspeech.co.uk)

## **DELTA: Deaf Education through Listening and Talking**

A national charity supporting deaf children and their families who wish to follow an auditory route. It provides information, publications and an annual summer school for families.

Telephone: 0845 1081 437

[enquires@deafeducation.org.uk](mailto:enquires@deafeducation.org.uk)

[www.deafeducation.org.uk](http://www.deafeducation.org.uk)

## **The Ear Foundation**

A national charity that supports people with cochlear implants or bone anchored hearing aids.

It runs parent, family and professional courses, and produces publications about communication and language that parents of all deaf children will find helpful. Parents can visit the Sounding Board ([www.soundingboard.earfoundation.org.uk](http://www.soundingboard.earfoundation.org.uk)) to ask questions about cochlear implants.

Telephone: 0115 942 1985

[info@earfoundation.org.uk](mailto:info@earfoundation.org.uk)

[www.earfoundation.org.uk](http://www.earfoundation.org.uk)

## **The Elizabeth Foundation**

A national charity that supports deaf babies, young, young children and pre-school children and their families and provides a home learning course for pre-school children.

Telephone: 0203 9237 2735

[info@elizabeth-foundation.org](mailto:info@elizabeth-foundation.org)

[www.elizabeth-foundation.org](http://www.elizabeth-foundation.org)

### **Ewing Foundation**

A national charity promoting inclusion and achievement of deaf children through listening and speaking.

Telephone: 07879 425397

**[www.ewing-foundation.org.uk](http://www.ewing-foundation.org.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](mailto:forest@forestbooks.com)

**[www.forestbooks.com](http://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](mailto:info@letterboxlibrary.com)

**[www.letterboxlibrary.com](http://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](http://www.smartplaynetwork.org)**

### **The National Literacy Trust**

The National Literacy Trust is an independent charity that believes everyone in the UK should have the literacy skills they need.

[support@literacytrust.org.uk](mailto:support@literacytrust.org.uk)

**[www.literacytrust.org.uk](http://www.literacytrust.org.uk)**

### **Orchard Toys**

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

**[www.orchardtoys.com](http://www.orchardtoys.com)**

### **Signed Stories**

Signed Stories is an ITV website designed primarily for deaf children, although hearing children will enjoy it too. It is a fun, busy website with subtitles and sign language, which encourages children to explore and offers easy access to a wide range of British books.

**[www.signedstories.com](http://www.signedstories.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](http://www.learnbsl.org)**

# Notes

Handwriting practice lines consisting of 20 horizontal dotted lines.

**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](http://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](http://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](http://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](http://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](mailto:helpline@ndcs.org.uk)**

**[www.ndcs.org.uk](http://www.ndcs.org.uk)**

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