



**National  
Literacy  
Trust**

Change your story


**Everyone ready  
for school**


# Starting school



It's normal for you and your child to feel a mix of emotions. As a parent, you want them to have the best possible start.

Your child will have lots of new experiences and things to get used to in their first weeks and months at school. The way you spend time together now can help prepare them for this exciting new adventure!

 When you chat together, your child is learning how to have a conversation and ask for help if they need it.

 When you encourage them to use their imagination, they are building their confidence to play with friends in the playground.

# is a big step...

This booklet is full of simple ways to make the most of everyday moments, at home and out and about.

These fun activities will help your child learn new words, grow their imagination and build their confidence in communicating with others.

Your little moments together will make a big difference; and it's never too late to start.

 When you share stories and sing songs together, you are showing them that it's fun to join in.



# Chat as you go about your day

Chatting with your child as you do everyday things is a great way to grow their vocabulary and show them how to communicate so they're used to having conversations.

- You could describe what you and your child are doing while sorting the washing. *"I'm taking clothes out of the washing machine. You're finding your socks."*
- You could give your child different options while making a snack. *"Would you like an apple or a banana? Shall we get it ready together?"*



## Why does this matter?

The more you chat at home, the more confident your child will feel talking to friends at school and asking grown-ups for help if they need it.



## Have fun pretending

Everyday activities can also be a chance to build your child's imagination.

They love watching what grown-ups do and often act this out when they play! Why not join in and make a game with their toys.

- Make a pretend snack for their teddy. You might say *“What kind of food does teddy want to eat? How will you make it for them? Can you show me?”*
- Pretend to get their toys ready to go to the park. You could say *“What clothes should they wear? How will we get to the park?”*

### **Why does this matter?**

Children are always making up games in the playground. By practising at home, your child will feel more confident to join in with their new friends at school.

# Active play time

Play is the basis of all learning. And it's fun!

**1** Drawing and mark making with 'tools' like crayons, chalk and sticks in the mud will help your child develop the small muscles in their hands, ready to hold a pencil.

**Learning to write takes time...**

★ Responding positively to their drawing and mark making from the start will build your child's confidence. It will also help them understand that making marks is a way to communicate with others.

**2** Let them play with everyday things like empty boxes, plastic pots or pegs – this helps their hands grow strong.





3

Encourage your child to dance, jump and play outside. These activities and others, like running, climbing and catching balls, help their whole body get ready for school too.

Encourage these activities as often as you can, and join in the fun too! Just a little time each day makes a big difference.

### **Why does this matter?**

Helping your child build strong hands and move their body well makes it easier for them to learn how to write when they start school.

Writing takes strength and control; things like holding a pencil, sitting still, and moving their arms and fingers in the right way.

When children have good motor skills, they can focus more on learning and will feel more confident in the classroom.

# Share books and stories

Sharing stories together is a great way to bond with your child while building their love of reading. It also helps to improve their concentration and listening skills, which will be useful at school.

## 1 Choosing stories

Children enjoy stories more when they can choose the books.

If you have some books at home, keep them somewhere your child can pick them up when they want to.

You can also visit your local library together so your child can choose new things to read!

## 2 Make story time fun and interactive

- Let them take the lead by holding the book and turning the pages.
- Encourage them to join in and repeat words or phrases. *“Let’s say it together: **big, bad wolf!**”*
- Talk about the pictures and what they notice on the pages.



### 3 Bring stories to life wherever you are

It's great to revisit the stories your child loves again and again; this doesn't just have to be through reading.

You could encourage them to re-tell their favourite stories when out and about, offering prompts to help them. "*What did they find in the woods?*"

As their confidence grows, encourage them to use their imagination, for example by adding new characters, changing the ending or even putting themselves into the story.



#### **Why does this matter?**

Telling made-up stories together helps your child use their imagination and learn new words. This will help them make new friends and take part in classroom activities.

Having fun with books at home will also help pave the way for enjoying stories and learning to read at school.

# Sing songs and rhymes wherever you are

Children love the rhyme and rhythm in stories, and it's the same with songs. Singing together is a fun way to build their language, memory and social skills.

You can learn new songs or repeat their favourites. Try changing the rhyming words or actions. Be as silly as you like! For example, *"If you're happy and you know it... have a hug!"*

## Why does this matter?

As well as learning new words, singing can build your child's confidence to join in with games and classroom activities throughout the school day.





# Tune in to sounds around you

You can help your child learn about sounds in fun ways.

When you're outside, talk about the noises you hear, like cars, birds or the wind.

At home, try playing "guess the object":

- 1** Choose everyday things that make sounds, like keys or a food wrapper.
- 2** Hide them under a tea towel or scarf.
- 3** Shake, rustle or tap them, then ask your child to guess what they are just by listening.

## **Why does this matter?**

**Singing songs and listening to sounds helps children notice patterns in words. This builds the skills they need to learn new words, and later, to read and write.**

# Their story starts with you

Your child is unique and you know them best. They grow and develop in their own way, just like the other children they will meet at school.

Whatever stage they are at, the time you spend together will always matter; both while they prepare for school and as they continue to learn and grow.

Your little moments together make a big difference.



Find more support

[wordsforlife.org.uk/starting-school](https://www.wordsforlife.org.uk/starting-school)

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