

A stylized black and white icon of a lit lightbulb with a lightning bolt inside, surrounded by radiating lines.

# Developing great writers at Unley Primary School

Research tells us that families have the most significant influence on their child's learning and development. This resource suggests some fun and practical activities you can do with your child at home to help develop their writing skills.

## Provide meaningful opportunities for writing

Writing should be an everyday activity at home. Families can create relevant and meaningful opportunities for their child to write, rather than asking them to write for the sake of writing. For example:

- Writing the shopping list.
- Sending letters and cards to friends and relatives.
- Writing emails.
- Writing recipes.
- Keeping a diary.
- Publishing personal stories.
- Labelling photos in the family album.
- Leaving notes for family members.
- Recording family events or travel experiences in a journal.

## Create a literacy-rich home

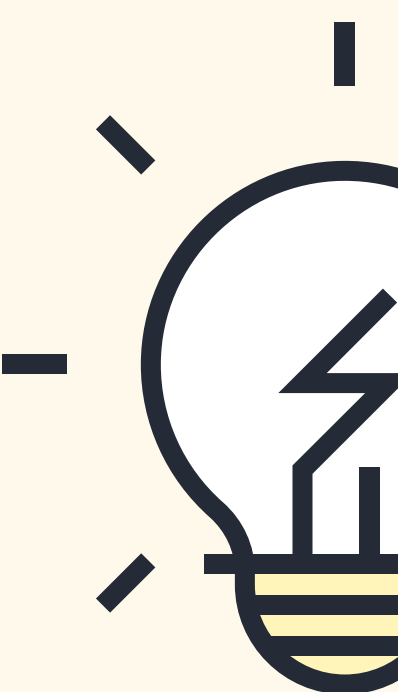
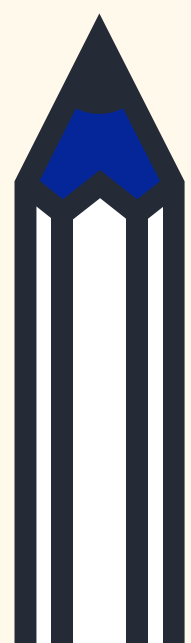
Children thrive in a home environment where they have every opportunity to engage in reading, writing, speaking and listening.

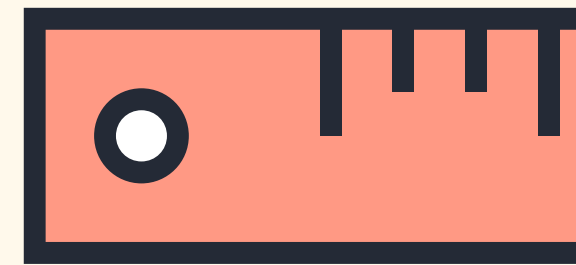
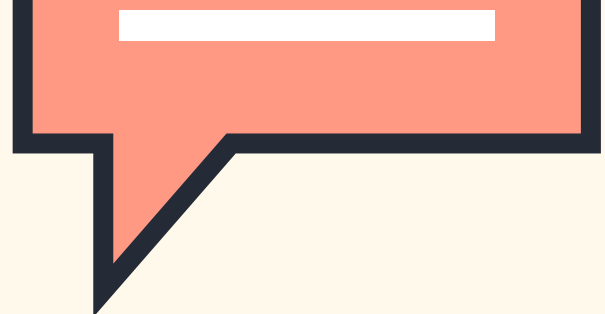
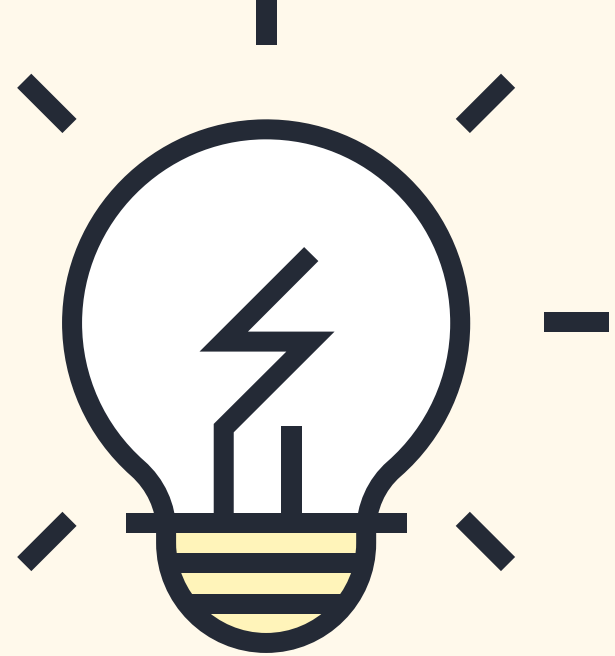
- Provide writing materials and a writing desk. Having different pens, pencils and types of paper, and a place to write, encourages your child to write more often. Creating a special 'writing box' to store your child's pens and pencils helps your child see writing as an important activity.
- Fill your home with books. With lots of books your child will see reading as a normal activity and will always have something to read. Take your child to the local library often so they can choose, borrow and renew books.
- Collect props for imaginative play and materials for craft projects. These can form the basis for practising speaking and writing.
- Set aside a time each week for 'family reading time' when every family member is reading, either individually or together. Share your favourite words or sentences from your own reading.

## Talk about books your child is reading

Reading increases your child's vocabulary and provides them with a model for their own writing. Discussing what your child is reading helps them to reflect more deeply on content and meaning. Some questions you could ask include:

- Who was your favourite character in the story? Why did you like that character?
- How does the place the story is set in make you feel?
- Does the main character change in the story? How does the character change?
- If you could change the ending of this book, what would it be?
- What do you think is the story's main message?
- Can you relate the story or message to another event or issue?





## Respond to your child's writing

Children see writing as important when their parents talk with them about their writing and show a genuine interest in what they have produced.

- Give your child opportunities to read their writing aloud while you listen.
- Try to resist giving general praise; instead ask a question.
- Reflect on their writing, e.g. 'I like how you started your story, you really hooked me in - read the first sentence again.'
- Leave comments about spelling, punctuation and grammar until after you have talked about the writing.
- Ask your child to underline 2-3 words that they would like to check for spelling.
- Ask your child if they would like your help to revise and re-craft their writing.
- Proudly display your child's work in a prominent position in your house. This will give them confidence and demonstrates the importance of writing.

## Build your child's vocabulary

Vocabulary is one of the best predictors of educational achievement. On average, children need to be exposed to a word 12-15 times before it is incorporated into their vocabulary. Also, children acquire vocabulary more easily when they hear and learn new words in context.

- Use children's literature and picture books as a great source of new and interesting words.
- Use parallel language in everyday conversations with your child to fast track their vocabulary development, e.g. 'Don't procrastinate doing your chores - that means don't keep putting them off', 'Please refrain from running in the house - please don't run.'
- Play dictionary games to help develop your child's dictionary skills. 'Fictionary' is a fun game to promote curiosity about words and their meanings.
- Play 'Give me 10' where your child is challenged to list 10 words for ordinary verbs such as 'walk' or 'think'.
- Play board games to help develop your child's oral language and word skills. Games such as UpWords, Bananagrams, Scattergories and Taboo are great fun and readily available from Kmart or Target.
- Visit our school blog <http://unleyps.edublogs.org> for home learning ideas, including family writing challenges and a template for 'fridge words' for the fridge at home.

## Talk with your child's teacher

When parents and teachers work together, children benefit. Teachers at Unley Primary welcome the opportunity to talk with you about your child's learning. Topics you could discuss with your child's teacher include:

- Your child's progress in literacy.
- Your child's achievement on writing assessments such as Brightpath.
- The goals your child is working towards in writing, and how you can support your child to achieve them.
- Strategies you can use to assist your child in areas they find difficult.
- How your child has responded to the tips in this resource.

