

Home Learning at Kew Riverside Primary School

From Reception to Year 2, reading is the most important homework. Your child may always have a book from the classroom library in his or her bag - try to read the book together every night. You'll probably be asked to fill in a 'reading record' about your child's progress with reading.

The time your child spends on practising key skills such as phonics flashcards, counting in 2s, 5s or 10s, learning times tables or spellings is less important than his or her understanding of it. But the following is a rough guide to the amount of time he or she should be spending on homework at primary school:

Years and 2	1 60 minutes a week (Spread over several evenings or two longer sessions at the weekend)
Years and 4	3 90 minutes a week (Spread over several evenings or two longer sessions at the weekend)
Years and 6	5 30 minutes a day or equivalent over two/three evenings or at the weekend (Spread over several evenings or two longer sessions at the weekend)

Primary school children talking to their families about what they learned in school on a particular day is perhaps the most valuable home learning of all, especially if you show interest and play an active role by asking your child questions about their day. Recalling what they have learned, understanding it and applying it will indicate they are achieving and making progress.

Tips for forming good habits when working at home

- Do find a quiet place at home to use as a home learning area. It needs a flat surface, a good light source and the right equipment eg pens, pencils, ruler, scissors, glue.
- Do be aware of modern teaching methods, e.g. in long division.
- Don't teach your child methods you used at school. It could confuse them.
- Do plan a timetable and agree on when your child will undertake this practise.
- Do allow your child to have something nutritional to eat before starting on any mental work.
- Do discuss any tasks with your child and how it connects with what they are learning at school.
- Do turn off the TV - but you could have music on if they find it helpful.
- Don't give your child the answer in order to get a task finished. Instead, explain how to look up information or find a word in a dictionary.
- Don't let home learning become a chore. Keep it fun and make it a special time that you both look forward to.

Helping your child with reading

Reading with your child is vital. **Research shows that it's the single most important thing you can do to help your child's education.** It's best to read little and often, so try to put aside some time for it every day.

Think of ways to make reading fun - you want your child to learn how pleasurable books can be. If you're both enjoying talking about the content of a particular page, linger over it for as long as you like.

Books aren't just about reading the words on the page, they can also present new ideas and topics for you and your child to discuss.

Tips for helping your child to enjoy books:

- **Encourage your child to pretend to 'read' a book before he or she can read words.**
- **Visit the library as often as possible - take out CDs and DVDs as well as books.**
- **Schedule a regular time for reading - perhaps when you get home from school or just before bed.**
- **Buy dual-language books if English isn't your family's first language - you can talk about books and stories, and develop a love for them, in any language.**
- **Look for books on topics that you know your child is interested in - maybe dragons, insects, cookery or a certain sport.**
- **Make sure that children's books are easily accessible in different rooms around your house.**

Helping your child with maths

As with reading, try to make maths as much fun as possible - games, puzzles and jigsaws are a great way to start. It's also important to show how we use maths skills in our everyday lives and to involve your child in this.

Identifying problems and solving them can also help your child develop maths skills. If you see him or her puzzling over something, talk about the problem and try to work out the solution together.

Don't shy away from maths if you didn't like it at school. Try to find new ways to enjoy the subject with your child.

Tips for helping your child to enjoy maths:

- **Point out the different shapes to be found around your home.**
- **Take your child shopping and talk about the quantities of anything you buy.**
- **Let your child handle money and work out how much things cost.**
- **Look together for numbers on street signs and car registration plates.**

Helping your child with writing

1. Build a climate of words at home. Go places and see things with your child, then talk about what has been seen, heard, smelled, tasted, touched. The basis of good writing is good talk, and younger children especially grow into stronger control of language when loving adults -- particularly parents -- share experiences and rich talk about those experiences.

2. Let children see you write often. You're both a model and a teacher. If children never see adults write, they gain an impression that writing occurs only at school. What you do is as important as what you say. Have children see you writing notes to friends, letters to business firms, perhaps stories to share with the children. From time to time, read aloud what you have written and ask your children their opinion of what you've said. If it's not perfect, so much the better. Making changes in what you write confirms for the child that revision is a natural part of writing -- which it is.

3. Be as helpful as you can in helping children write. Talk through their ideas with them; help them discover what they want to say. When they ask for help with spelling, punctuation, and usage, supply that help. Your most effective role is not as a critic but as a helper. **Rejoice in effort, delight in ideas, and resist the temptation to be critical.**

4. Provide a suitable place for children to write. A quiet corner is best, the child's own place, if possible. If not, any flat surface with elbow room, a comfortable chair, and a good light will do.

5. Give the child, and encourage others to give, the gifts associated with writing:

- pens of several kinds
- pencils of appropriate size and hardness
- a desk lamp
- pads of paper, stationery, envelopes -- even stamps
- a booklet for a diary or daily journal (Make sure that the booklet is the child's private property; when children want to share, they will.)
- a dictionary appropriate to the child's age and needs. Most dictionary use is for checking spelling, but a good dictionary contains fascinating information on word origins, synonyms, pronunciation, and so forth.
- a thesaurus for older children. This will help in the search for the "right" word.
- erasers for correcting errors that the child wants to repair without rewriting or a small wipeboard.

6. Encourage (but do not demand) frequent writing. Be patient with reluctance to write. "I have nothing to say" is a perfect excuse. Recognize that the desire to write is a sometime thing. There will be times when a child "burns" to write; others, when the need is cool. But frequency of writing is important to develop the habit of writing.
7. Praise the child's efforts at writing. Forget what happened to you in school and resist the tendency to focus on errors of spelling, punctuation, and other mechanical aspects of writing. Emphasise the child's successes. For every error the child makes, there are dozens of things he or she has done well.
8. Share letters, texts and emails from friends and relatives. Treat letters as special events. Urge relatives and friends to write notes and letters to the child, no matter how brief. Writing is especially rewarding when the child gets a response. When thank-you notes are in order, after a holiday especially, sit with the child and write your own notes at the same time. Writing ten letters (for ten gifts) is a heavy burden for the child; space the work and be supportive.
9. Encourage the child to write for information, free samples, and travel brochures.
10. Be alert to occasions when the child can be involved in writing, for example, helping with grocery lists, adding notes at the end of parents' letters, sending holiday and birthday cards, taking down telephone messages, writing notes to friends, helping plan trips by writing for information, drafting notes to school for parental signature, writing notes to letter carriers and other service persons, and preparing invitations to family get-togethers.

Writing for real purposes is rewarding, and the daily activities of families present many opportunities for purposeful writing. Involving your child may take some coaxing, but it will be worth your patient effort.