

# Supporting Your Child with Writing

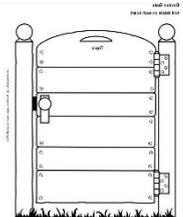
Children with dyslexia and other learning difficulties can find writing very challenging. It is really hard to find a balance between helping them improve and keeping them motivated. As with most skills, practise makes perfect and the more children write, the more they will learn.

Below are some ideas help them improve the quality of what they write.



## The writing process

- Make sure that the writing has a purpose and an audience. A real purpose is more motivating – e.g. writing to a family member or friend that they aren't currently seeing or writing to enter a competition – there are examples of competitions on our website [here](#).
- Give them some sentence starters e.g. 'Once there was a huge ugly monster. He was...'
- Help them to plan their story structure first and identify the plot and key words. Pictures can be helpful e.g. what is on the other side of this gate? What might happen when you open the gate? <https://www.eduplace.com/graphicorganizer/>
- Draw a story map together. Make it colourful, stick in pictures, add words, take your time talking about what they are going to write about.
- Children need to have experience of different types of writing so explore different types of writing e.g. fiction and non-fiction, reports, letters, recipes, jokes, poems.
- Most children will be familiar with the idea of drafting and improving their writing, illustrated in the writing journey below.



Supporting their writing can be very motivating. Ways you can do this are -

- Scribing for them (writing while they dictate), especially if you talk about what you are doing
- Writing apps like Clicker Docs, Clicker Sentence and Claro are excellent, but expensive.
- All computers will have voice-to-text and text-to-voice available as part of the accessibility settings. There are programmes like Dragon Naturally Speaking which will do speech to text.



## Responding to their writing

- Don't insist on re-writing
- See past the errors and focus on what they are communicating and how well they are doing that.
- Talk about content, use of interesting words, structure and story at least as much as about neatness and accuracy.
- Don't mark everything.
- Do notice progress - even if it's still wrong – look for improvements in their writing.
- Talk to them and decide together how they can make their writing better.
- Help them to collect and build a personal bank of useful words, phrases and writing frames.

## Helping them to structure their writing

On the final page we have added some ideas for different story types and examples of how these could be structured.

- Choose a story type with your child
- Read an example of that type of story – you could read this to them or you could read together depending on the reading ability of your child.
- Look at the notes on plot – discuss with your child where the parts of the plot appeared in the story you read.
- Ask them to write their own story using the plot ideas.
- Encourage them use their imagination to add their own ideas.

Structure	Plot	Examples
<b>Overcoming the Monster stories</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 Meet the monster and the hero</li> <li>2 The hero moves closer to the monster but is still safe</li> <li>3 The hero and monster meet. They fight. It looks like the hero might fail.</li> <li>4 There is a final battle. All seems lost but is finally won.</li> <li>5 The monster is beaten. The hero enjoys the victory.</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Little Red Riding Hood</li> <li>• The Gruffalo</li> <li>• The Iron Man (Ted Hughes)</li> <li>• The Wolves in the Wall (Neil Gaiman)</li> </ul>
<b>Rags to Riches stories</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 The hero is unhappy. They are surrounded by people that treat them badly.</li> <li>2 The hero meets ordeals and overcomes them.</li> <li>3 Everything goes wrong. The hero is separated from what is important to them and desponds.</li> <li>4 The hero finds an inner strength. This is put to the test.</li> <li>5 The hero succeeds and lives happily ever after.</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cinderella</li> <li>• The Cloud Tea Monkeys (Mal Peet)</li> <li>• Trash (Andy Mulligan)</li> <li>• Holes (Louis Sachar)</li> </ul>
<b>Quest stories</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 Life becomes difficult. The situation can only be improved if the hero goes on a journey to find/solve something.</li> <li>2 The hero sets out on the journey. They meet problems along the way and have a thrilling escape. There may be someone to guide them.</li> <li>3 The hero can see the end goal but something terrible stands in the way</li> <li>4 The hero undergoes a series of tests (usually 3)</li> <li>5 The hero escapes and finds what they were looking for.</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lila and the Secret of the Rain (David Conway)</li> <li>• The Firework Maker's Daughter (Philip Harry Potter)</li> <li>• Pullman)</li> <li>• The London Eye Mystery (Siobhan Dowd)</li> </ul>
<b>Voyage and Return stories</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 The main character moves into a strange world, unlike anything they have experienced before</li> <li>2 The new world is exciting but it can never feel like home</li> <li>3 The mood changes to frustration/difficulty. A shadow begins to intrude which becomes increasingly alarming</li> <li>4 The shadow starts to dominate and pose a threat</li> <li>5 The hero escapes. The question is asked, what did they gain or learn?</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jack and the Beanstalk</li> <li>• Meerkat Mail (Emily Gravett)</li> <li>• Odd and the Frost Giants (Neil Gaiman)</li> <li>• Leon and the Place Between (Angela McAllister)</li> </ul>
<b>Comedy stories</b>	<p>The idea of moving from 'ignorance' to 'knowledge' is at the heart of this plot</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 Two or more things or people are brought together</li> <li>2 Someone does something and everything becomes confused</li> <li>3 Things become even more confused</li> <li>4 Everything is sorted out</li> <li>5 They live happily ever after</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fortunately the Mill (Neil Gaiman)</li> <li>• Diary of a Wimpy Kid (Jeff Kinney)</li> <li>• David Walliams' books</li> </ul>
<b>Tragedy stories</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 The hero is looking for something they are desperate to find.</li> <li>2 They find it and all seems well</li> <li>3 Things start to go wrong. The person/object may start to behave darkly</li> <li>4 The hero starts to lose control</li> <li>5 The hero is destroyed</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fox (Margaret Wild)</li> <li>• The Viewer (Shaun Tan)</li> <li>• Rose Blanche (Ian McEwan)</li> </ul>
<b>Rebirth stories</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 The hero falls under someone or something's power.</li> <li>2 All seems fine for a while</li> <li>3 This power becomes stronger and the hero seems trapped</li> <li>4 This continues for a long time and it feels as if the hero has lost everything</li> <li>5 The hero has an epiphany and realises what they need to do. They finish the story more self-aware as a character.</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tidy (Emily Gravett)</li> <li>• Winter's Child (Angela McAllister)</li> <li>• How to Live Forever (Colin Thompson)</li> <li>• The Promise (Nicola Davies)</li> </ul>