



# Ideas to support Literacy in the Early Years

Produced by The Early Years Quality Improvement Team.



HILLINGDON

LONDON

# Language and Literacy links

## Early Learning Goals

	reading	writing	
self-esteem	gross motor strength	fine motor strength	
	speaking	understanding	listening

An environment that stimulates reading should include:

- Cosy places to read-dens, tents, cushions, camps
- Books placed alongside interactive displays
- Reference materials such as posters and catalogues placed in relevant areas
- Well displayed and well kept books
- Opportunities to read both inside and out
- Texts that reflect a range of cultures
- Texts that appeal to boys
- Opportunities to listen to and act out stories

# Resources that promote reading and storying:

- Alphabet friezes at child height
- Large magnetic boards with letters
- Large foam/plastic/wooden letters.
- Letter beanbags.
- Large floor alphabet mat
- Range of reading materials; fiction books, reference books, magazines, brochures, posters, catalogues
- Collections of vocabulary displayed in specific areas
- Imaginative and small world resources
- Story sacks
- Puppets
- Homemade and setting made books
- Blank book formats



# Role of the Adult

- Shares their passion for reading and stories
- Provides many opportunities for reading both inside and outside
- Purposeful and enjoyable reading experiences
- Tells stories as well as reads stories
- Makes stories interesting through use of voice, props and setting
- Model reading and focus on environmental print
- Encourage children to use language, rhythm, rhyme and reading in their play
- Engage in genuine and real conversations
- Involve parents
- Make words fun



# Literacy Rich Environment

## What's obvious?

### Print Everywhere!

- Posted Alphabets:
  - at least 2 in every classroom
- Name Labels:
  - each child's name should appear at least 4-5 times in the classroom
- Item Labels:
  - every area and resource should have a text and image label
  - labels should be on child's eye level
- Functional Print:
  - Weather Chart
  - Calendar
  - Maps

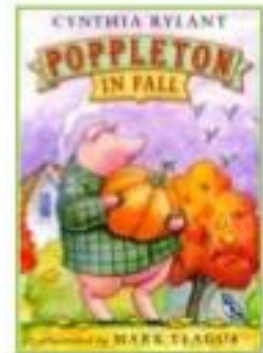


# Literacy Rich Behavior

## What else?

Ask open-ended questions

- Give time for children to think about
- Provide encouraging feedback



Connect books to children's own lives

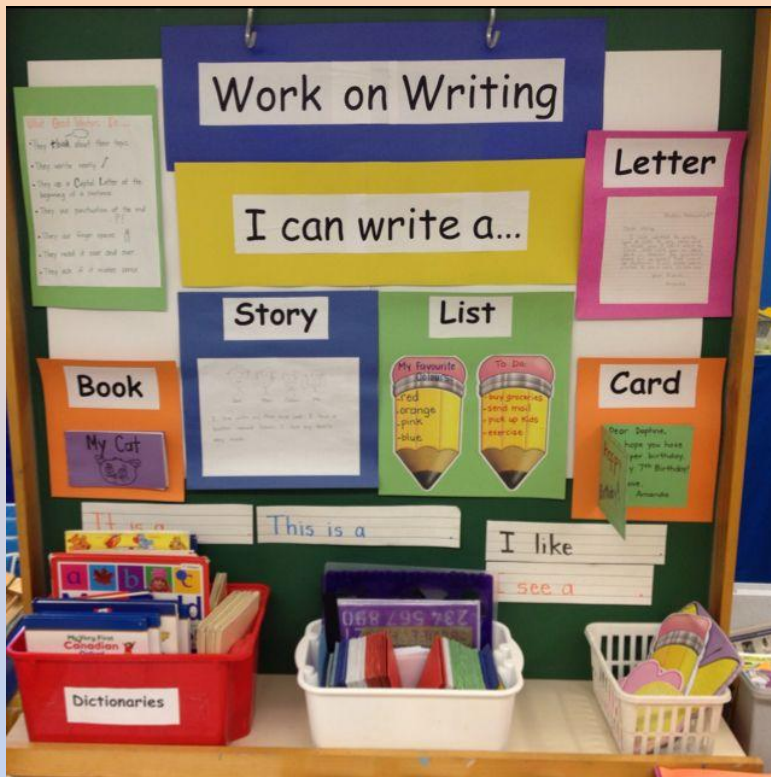
- Comparison and contrast questions
- What would you do?
- How would that make you feel?



Encourage children to select the stories

Read books related to classroom activities





Make sure that reading opportunities are across the environment . Provide books in activity areas, challenge cards, labels etc to model the importance of reading to support learning and for both enjoyment and information



## Developing a 'Book Nook'

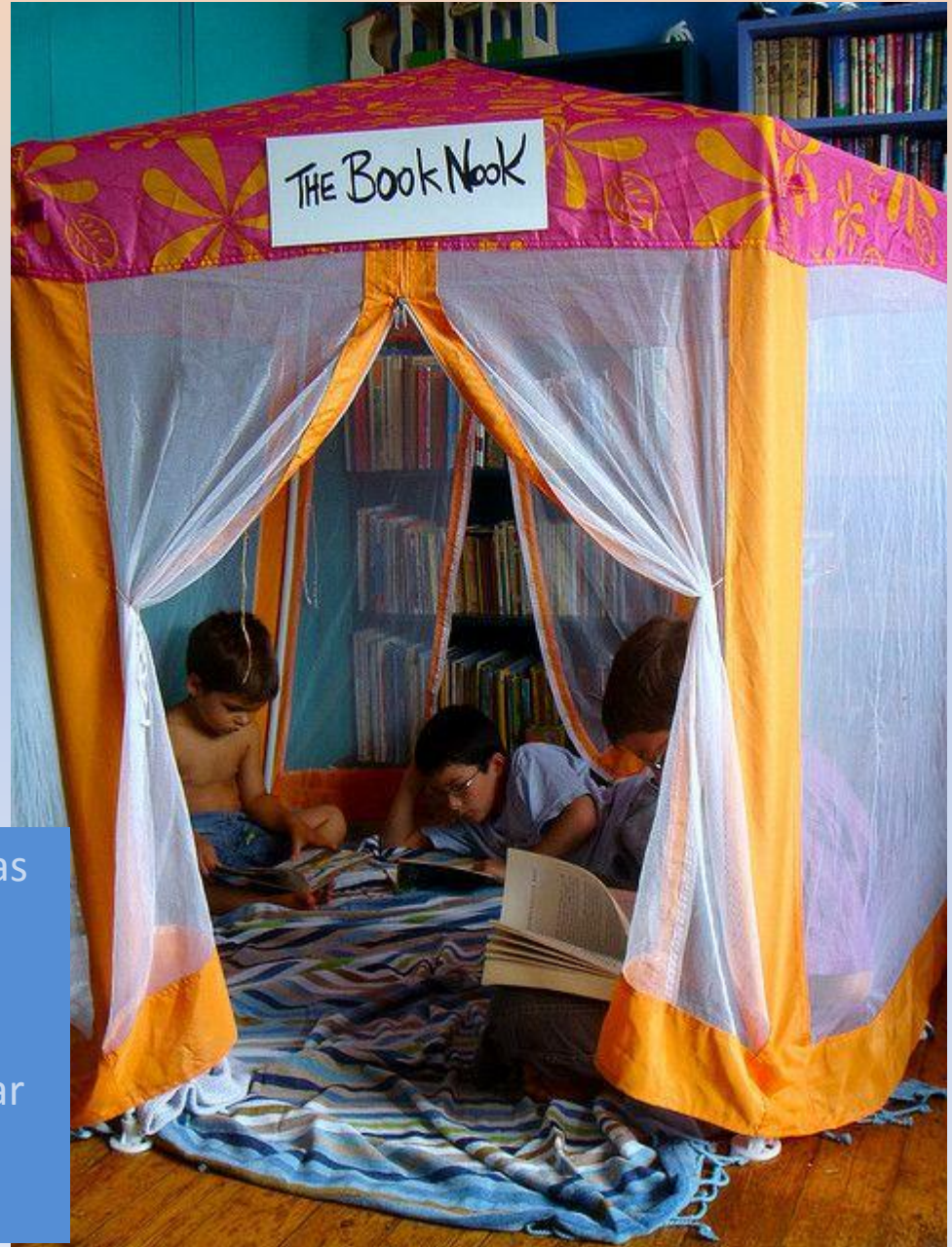


Whilst you may have a dedicated 'reading' area, it is useful to provide new and novel spaces to encourage children to explore literature. Dens and covered areas are particularly popular with boys





Try to make your reading spaces as inviting as possible and use the premise that less is more when providing the reading material. Regularly changing the books is far better than having everything available all of the time.





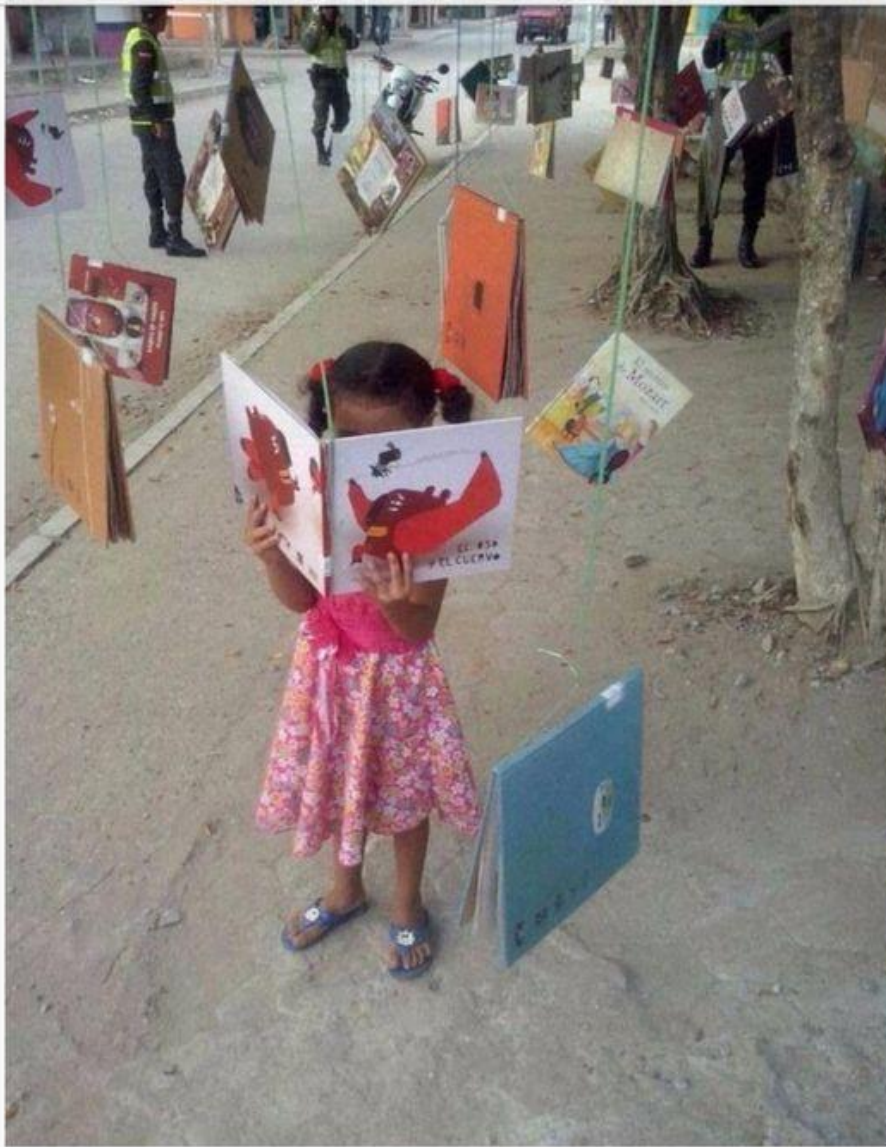
Reading spaces do not have to be large. You could possibly consider having several smaller areas rather than one large space.





Don't forget that some children spend a good section of each day outside, so make sure that reading spaces are readily available outside as well.





Try to consider different ways to present reading opportunities, that are inviting and unusual



Providing story shelves is a really good way to support children in re-telling well known stories and to use the language of books in their play



Build up these baskets/shelves over time and make sure that the children are familiar with the books and stories before leaving them to explore them independently



# Book area



# shelves

When organising a book/reading area, it is useful to limit the number of books available to enable the children to easily select their texts, try sorting the books into different baskets such as rhyme books, fiction, non-fiction, sound books, flap books etc. Providing a good range but with only a few of each is far better than having a bulging book box so full that the children can't really see what is there. By limiting the selection you can then swap books every so often to keep their interest.



Book buddies are a really simple strategy to encourage children to talk out loud about books – if you have space let children have their own book buddy, alternatively provide a few that are shared near to you reading spaces. Make sure they are always with the children at whole class/group story times. The book buddies may have some questions they would like to ask at the end of the story!!!





**TESCO**  
Every little helps



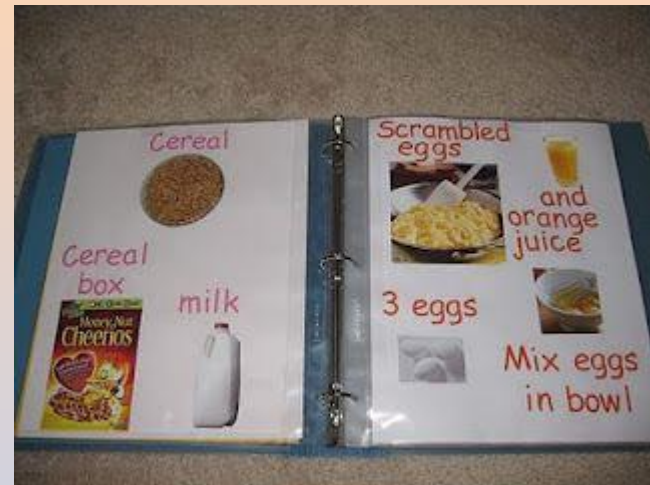
Sainsbury's  
*live well for less*

**I SPY LETTERS**



Help children to realise that they are surrounded by print, they probably already recognise many words from the world around them and support them to recognise they are reading when they recognise these combinations of letters in signs and packages.

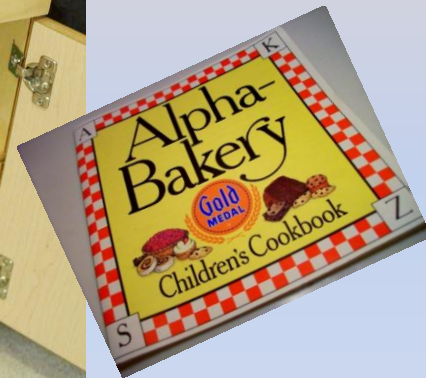
Within your continuous provision make sure that you provide opportunities for children to interact with and use print. Home role play is excellent for this, shopping lists, TV magazines, newspapers, take away menus, recipe books, etc are all everyday reading that happens at home. Try to incorporate reading and letters into every activity area.



### Pancake Menu

Choose 2 toppings for your pancake.  
What is the cost of your pancake?

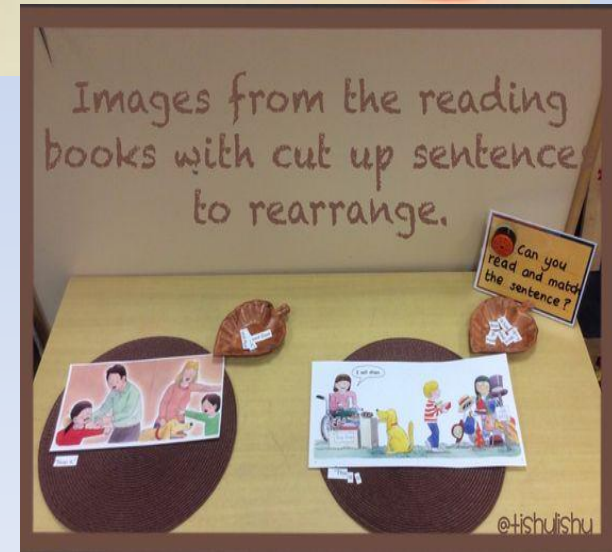
	Lemon	2p
	Sugar	1p
	Golden Syrup	3p
	Strawberries	5p
	Ice-cream	4p
	Chocolate	6p



# We're Going on a Word Hunt



Adult led and structured challenges need to be planned to support children in their understanding of print. Settings need to ensure that children are taught to look for letters, recognise sounds in words and to know that groups of letters are words and groups of words are sentences.





Dramatic play using a well known story is another way to support children in using book language, to structure the story and learn about plot, characters, scenes etc. When appropriate follow up a popular story by providing props to support children in acting out the story in their play.





Bear Hunt...

Providing small world scene also allows children to explore the story and re-enact it. Try to build up a bank of props for the children's favourite books and stories for them to use. Always make sure that the book is available alongside the small world resources.



# Phonics

In order to develop phonological awareness children first need to learn to listen, this involves:

Discrimination of sound – a foreground sound against background noise

Social listening – looking at the person talking, remembering and responding to what is said, turn-taking in conversations

Developing aural attention span

Developing auditory memory – remembering songs and rhymes and keeping a steady beat.

***Down load the document and play all of the games in phase one.***

Each aspect has a range of planned activities

These are designed to help children:

Listen attentively

Enlarge their vocabulary

Speak confidently to adults and other children

Discriminate phonemes

Reproduce audibly the phonemes they hear, in order, all through the word

Use sound talk to segment into phonemes

**Letters and Sounds Phase 1 : 'Adult-led activities in a language-rich provision linked to play'**

## Seven aspects

1 General sound discrimination-  
environmental

2 General sound discrimination-  
instrumental

3 General sound discrimination-body  
percussion

4 Rhythm and rhyme

5 Alliteration

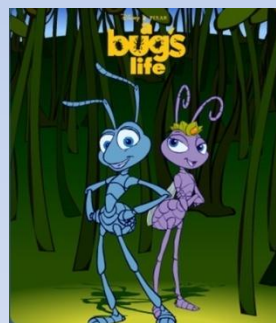
6 Voice Sounds

7 Oral blending and segmenting



# Resources to support phonic work

- Collections of objects linked to a letter
- Jigsaw puzzles
- Connecting letters
- Feely bags
- Letter mats
- Letter dominoes
- Tactile letters
- Mirrors
- Alphabet books



**Bb**



Let children play with letters in as many ways as you can









alphabet  
sound jump!

THE IMAGINATION TREE





Ignore the capital letters in this image – but the idea is simple. Can you make a simple CVC word – if you can, throw your balloon at the initial sound and say the word.



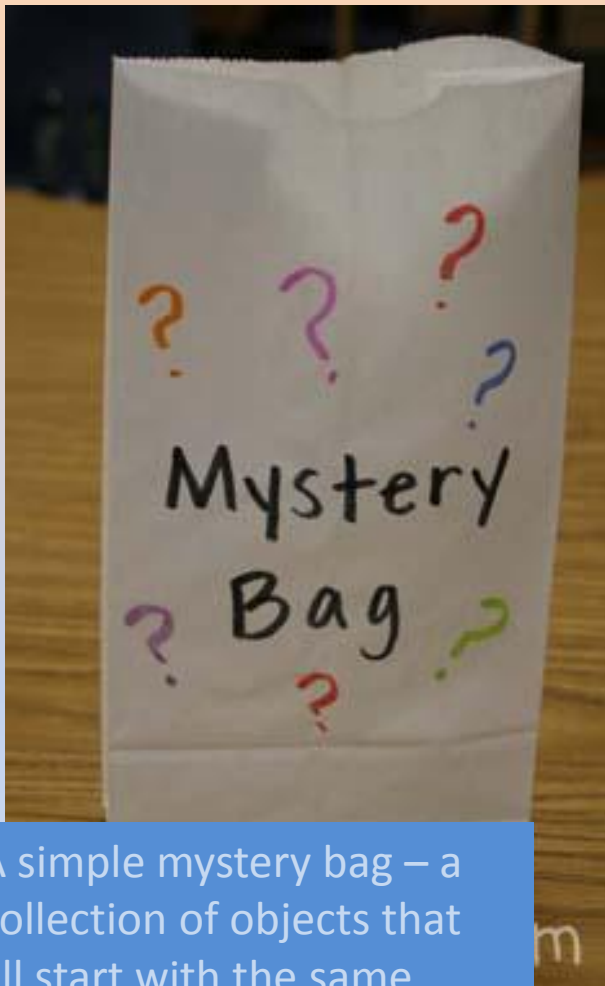
## Water Balloon Phonics

www.howweclearn.com



A simple hidden object game - find the object and does it rhyme to the card.

Rhyme or  
SLIME!!



A simple mystery bag – a collection of objects that all start with the same phoneme to explore – you could also add something that doesn't belong – can they identify it? Why doesn't it belong?



Sorting out rhyming groups – understanding onset and rime – the initial sound changes but the end of the word stays the same



Rhyme skittles

Phonic Phases 2 – 6  
Variations of 'Treasure and  
Trash' games ...

Rich contexts  
to investigate ...

Sound  
Detectives and  
crime  
scenes!!





Hide the Pom Pom  
under a cup and  
ask a friend to guess  
what digraph it's  
underneath.

Jessicawebb92  
PICCOLLAGE



Blending and segmenting  
opportunities for each  
phonic phase



# Phonic Challenge

s c at

p tin

I can write cvc words

by

I can write cvc words.

r ai n

n igh t



ai t  
rain

night

m





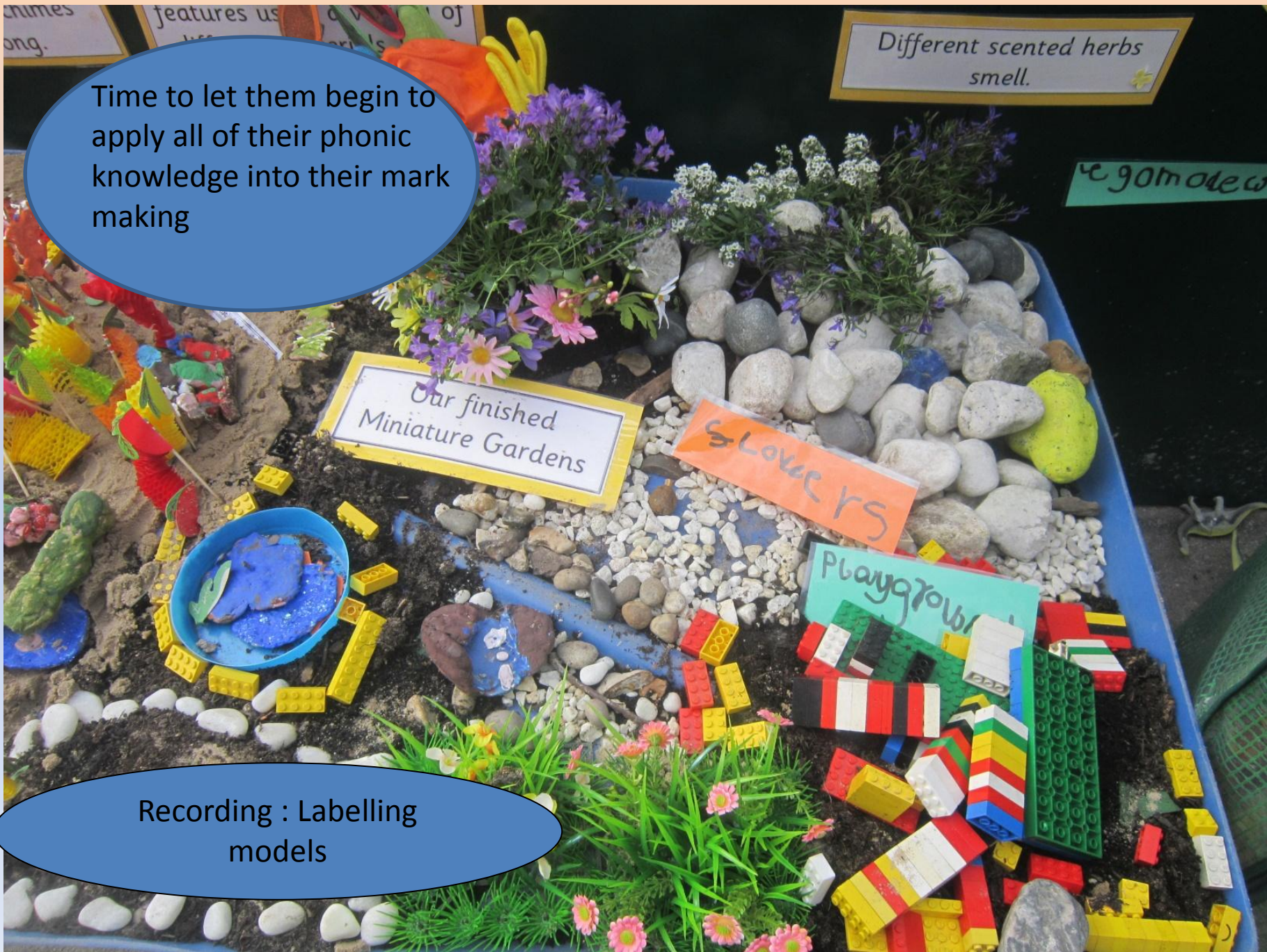
Challenges, games, investigation stations



# Making words

- Now the children will be *seeing* letters and words, as well as hearing them
- They will be shown how to make words by:
  - Breaking up words into individual sounds (sound the word out- oral segmenting)
  - Select the correct letter to represent the sounds
  - Make a phonetically plausible attempt! Use magnetic letters/ write





Time to let them begin to apply all of their phonic knowledge into their mark making

Recording : Labelling models

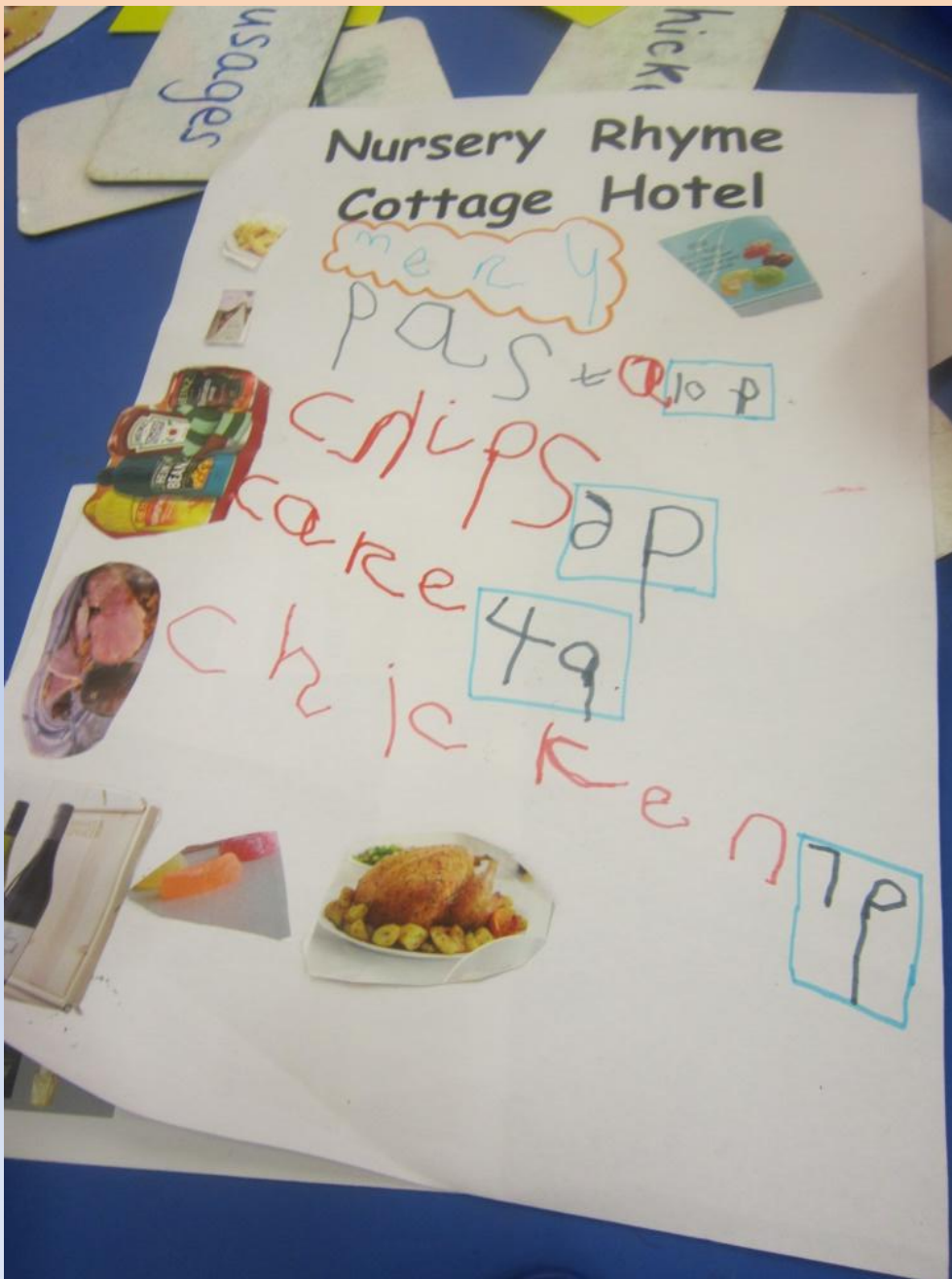
Different scented herbs smell.

Our finished Miniature Gardens

Love rs

Playgrow

egomade



Role-play contexts  
for writing :

A hotel menu

# Writing

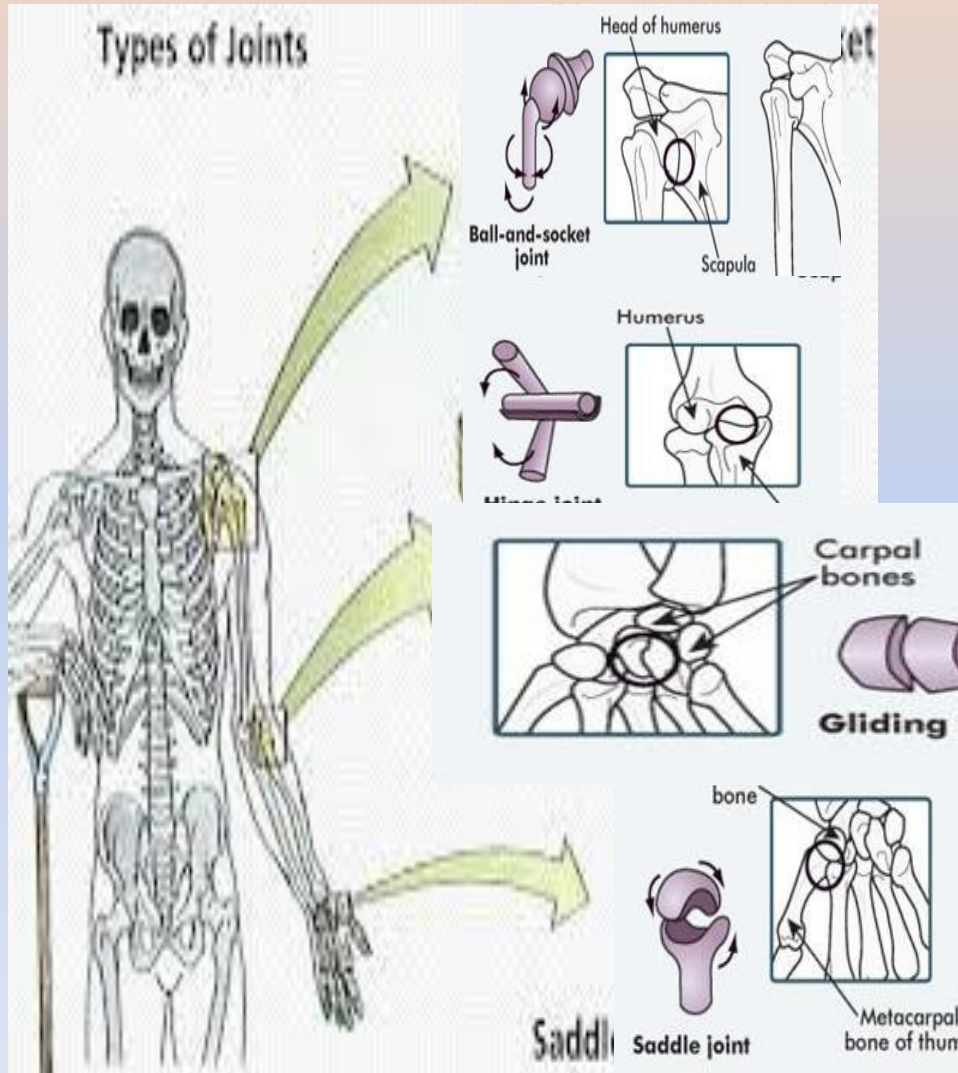


# In order to write my name...

1. My upper body must be strong enough to hold my body in an upright standing or sitting position.
2. My shoulders muscles must be strong enough to control the weight of my arm, and flexible enough to rotate freely so I can position my arm for writing.
3. My upper arm supports the weight of my lower arm and hand, delivering the hand to the page.
4. My lower arm provides a sturdy fulcrum on which my wrist rotates.
5. My wrist keeps my hand steady and rotates to the appropriate position.
6. My fingers fold around the pencil which is held in place by my thumb.
7. Together, all five fingers do a precision dance on the page:
  - a. placing the pencil at the exact angle to meet the page
  - b. pressing down and maintaining the right amount of pressure to leave the imprint.
  - c. coordinating the tiny up, down, left, and right movements across the page.



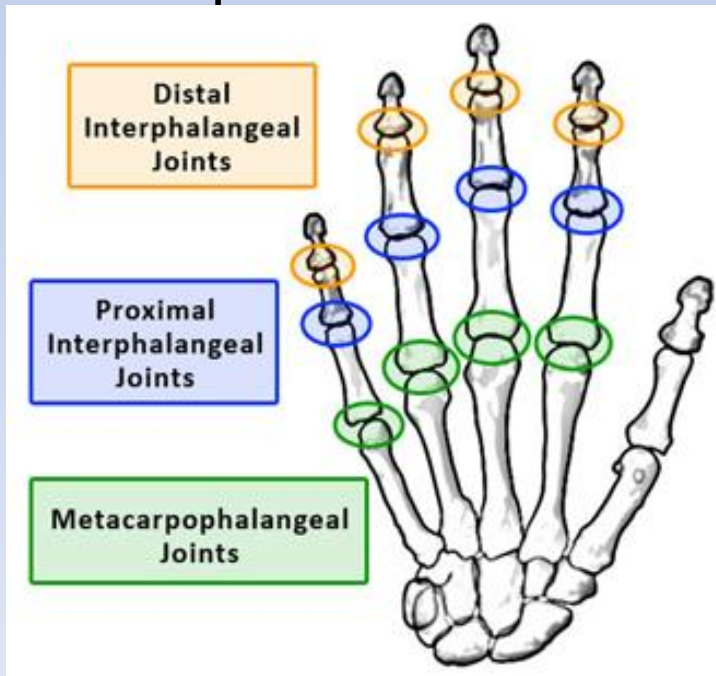
# Understanding the Physical skills necessary for Writing



- The Physical Journey that our brain takes us on to become a dexterous mark-maker is actually quite straightforward and makes perfect sense !
- It starts at the nearest 'bendy bit' (shoulder) of the arm where the greatest muscle group is strongest and then works its way down to the next 'bendy bit' (elbow) once the muscles and balance will support that movement.
- The pivots then work their way down to the wrist.
- The end of the pivot journey will be when children get that mark-making implement to the very last, smallest set of pivots, right at the end of the fingers.

# Pivot Journey

- If children can hold their writing tools there, then they will have the fullest, most dexterous range of movements that our bodies can provide.







# Pencil grip

Developing strong muscles in the hand supports children's pencil grip and makes the writing process easier for children.

Reflect on your current provision in this area....

- How are you providing exciting & motivating opportunities for children to develop these necessary fine motor skills?
- How are you assessing your children's abilities in this area and more importantly what are you doing about it?

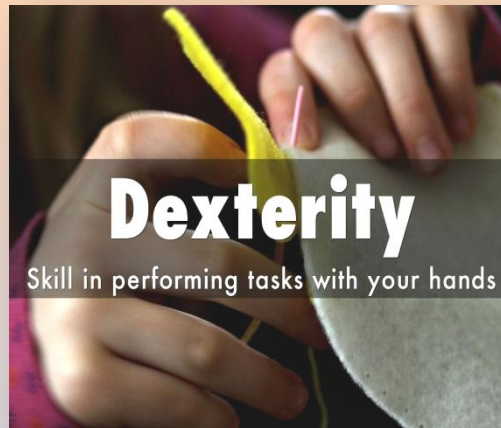


# Dexterity

The hand is quite a complex piece of machinery and is made up of lots of different joints and muscle groups that interconnect and work together to provide maximum dexterity.

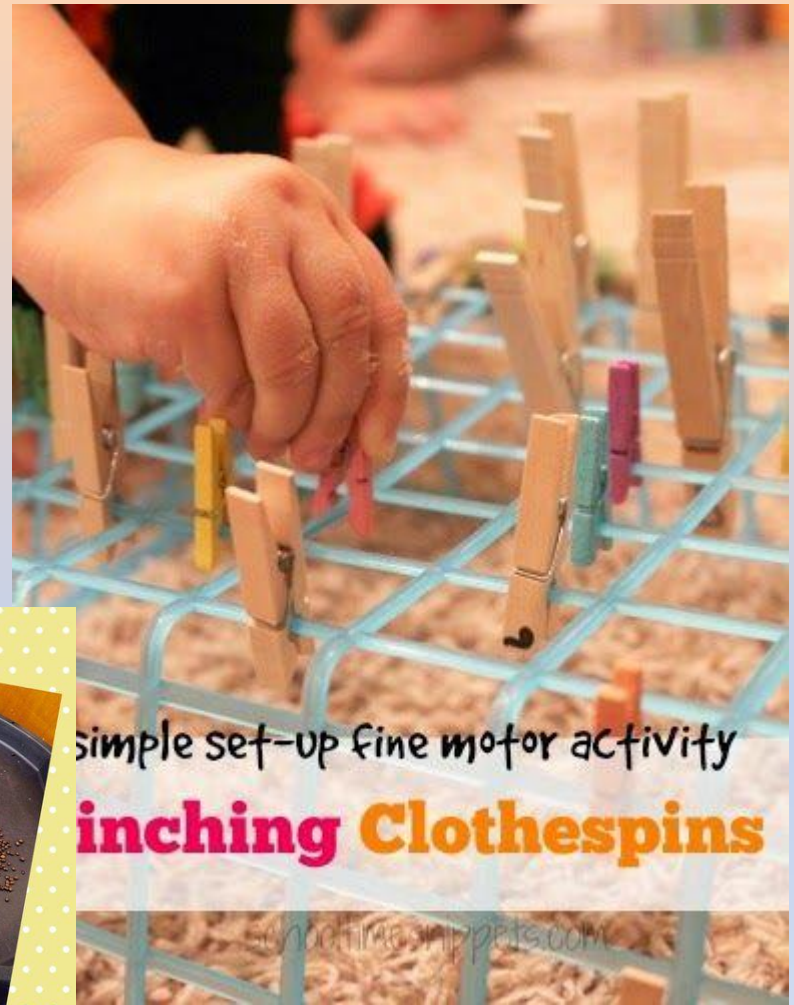
Children need to be proficient in a wide range of skills to become a writer.

It may be worth taking a look at our **'Funky Fingers'** strategies.



The following examples will get you on your journey towards providing different daily play experiences to support fine motor development





simple set-up fine motor activity  
**Pinching Clothespins**

[mattiaswippets.com](http://mattiaswippets.com)



**Crushing  
coffee  
beans  
with  
pestle  
and  
mortars**

@Jessicawebb92  
michigan



Exploring fruit with juicers.

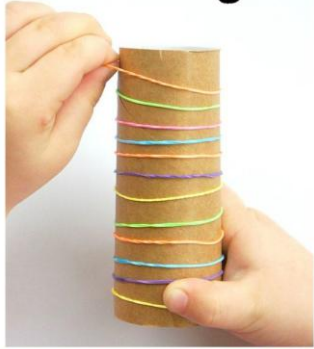
Jessicawebb92  
PICCOLAGE



Teaching 2 and 3 Year Olds



# Fine Motor Tube Challenge



# Reading challenge with mini padlocks



I intend to set this up as a  
Finger Gym challenge

@Tishylishy

Try to make sure that there are  
daily opportunities for children  
to strengthen and develop  
their fine motor co-ordination  
to support their use and  
control of writing tools.



- Children need to be motivated to write.
- There needs to be purpose and engagement.

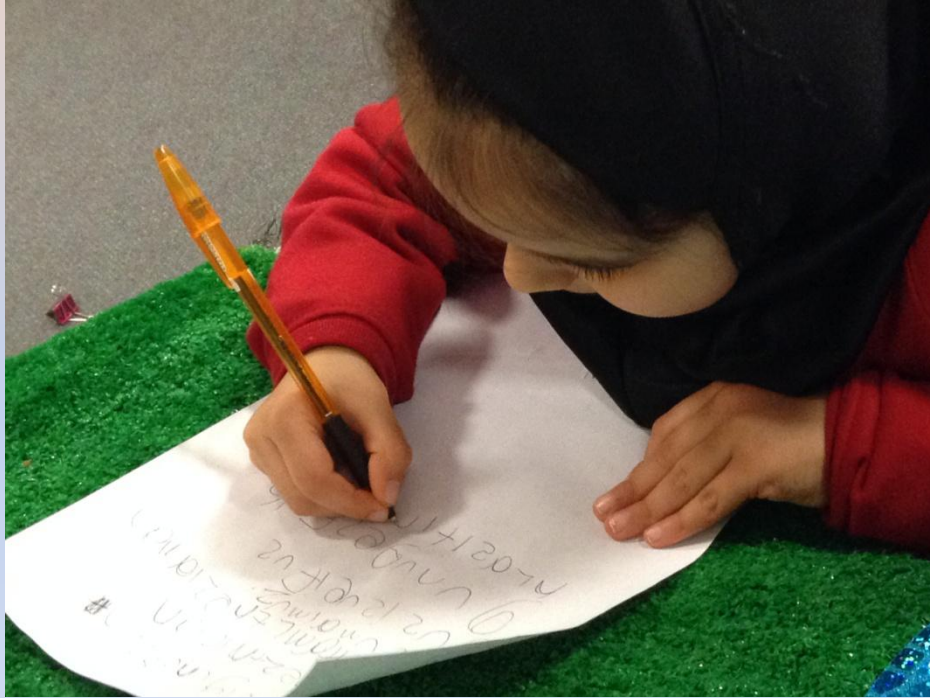
By engagement, the experience needs to promote:

- ✓ a 'can do' attitude. \*Characteristics of Effective Learning (CoELs')
- ✓ a healthy balance between challenge and achievable outcomes.
- ✓ Success: Positive experiences that will secure future engagement e.g., children motivated to initiate writing (a purpose to share what they are thinking), apply new learning and skills (linking thinking, physical and phonological development.)

This will help children to make connections and persevere/ sustain concentration levels to link the different processes involved in writing together. (CoEL)



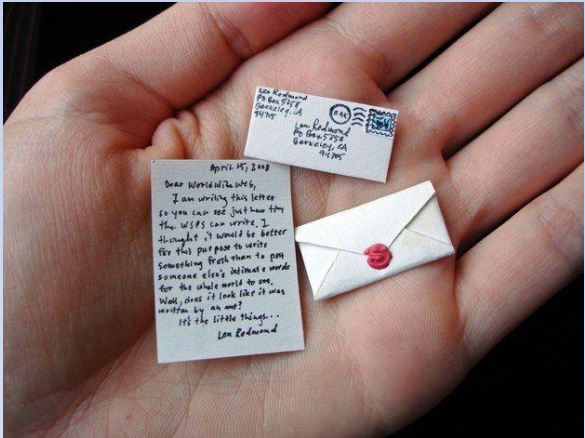
# Inside and Out



# Horizontally and vertically



# Large and small



At a table or on the floor

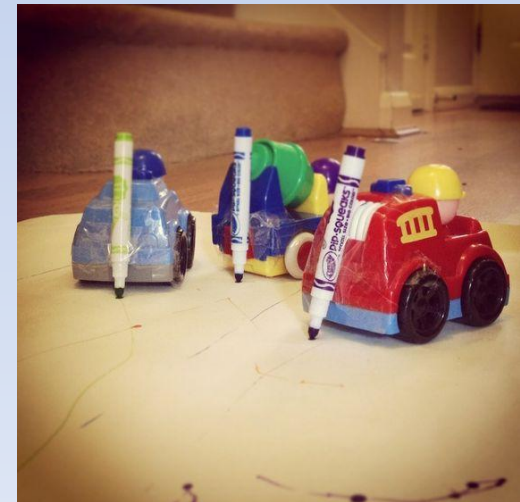


Or anywhere that takes  
their fancy

# With pens and pencils



# And a whole caboodle of other equipment...



# On paper and more exciting surfaces



Cover the table in cling film to encourage writing / mark making.

@Jessicawebb92  
PINCOURAGE



# With a friend or independently





# Writing Areas



# What can you put into a writing area?

- Pencils – lead and coloured
- Pens-biros
- Felt tipped pens
- Chalk/charcoal
- Post it notes
- Index cards
- Envelopes
- Invitations
- Diaries
- Calendars
- Luggage labels
- Address book
- Greetings cards
- Ready made home made books
- Date stamps
- Glue sticks
- Scissors
- String
- Split pins



- Paperclips
- Sharpeners
- Erasers
- Calculators
- Old keyboard
- Note books
- Bull dog clips
- Treasury tags
- Post box
- Message board
- Shopping lists
- Order forms
- Telephone message pads/telephone
- Hole punch
- Stapler
- Sellotape/masking tape
- Headed paper
- Bordered paper
- Examples of completed samples of writing



Writing stations both indoors and outdoors



Interesting, inviting  
and well maintained



It doesn't have  
to be expensive



Don't forget that writing doesn't just happen inside the classroom. Children can and will write wherever you provide the resources and stimulus





Replace the mark making table with a PE mat. The children flocked to the area!



Change things around from time to time to keep the children's interests and curiosity.

@Jessicawebb92  
PicCollage

# Writing opportunities across the whole environment



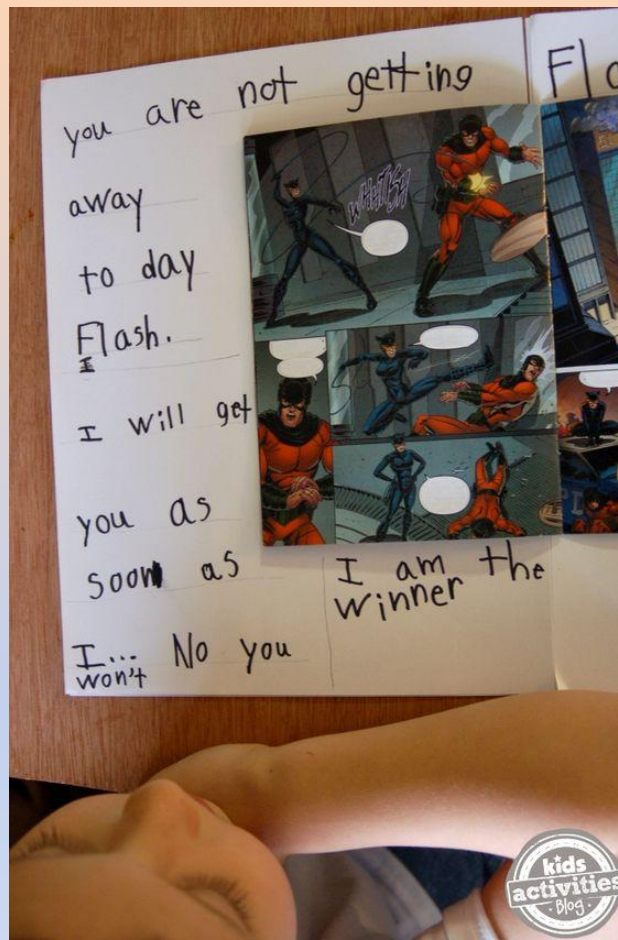
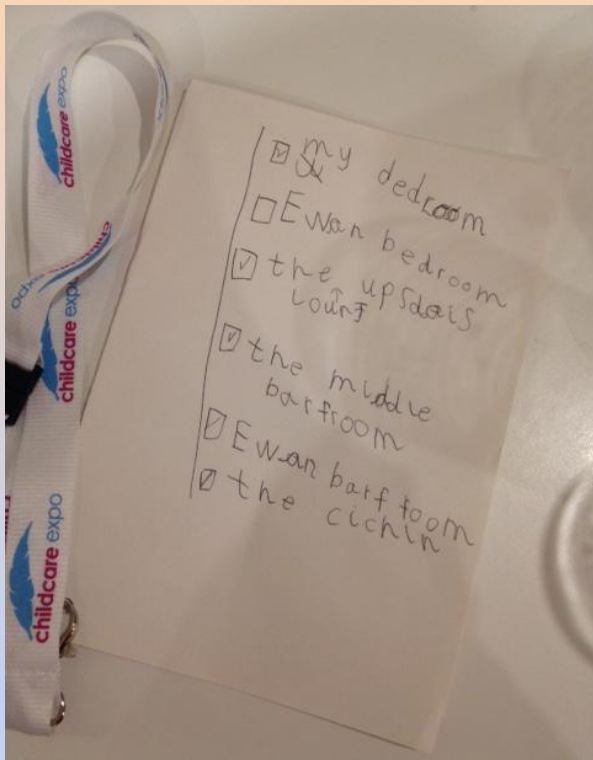


Children go on a nature hunt and then write a list of what they collected in their bags.

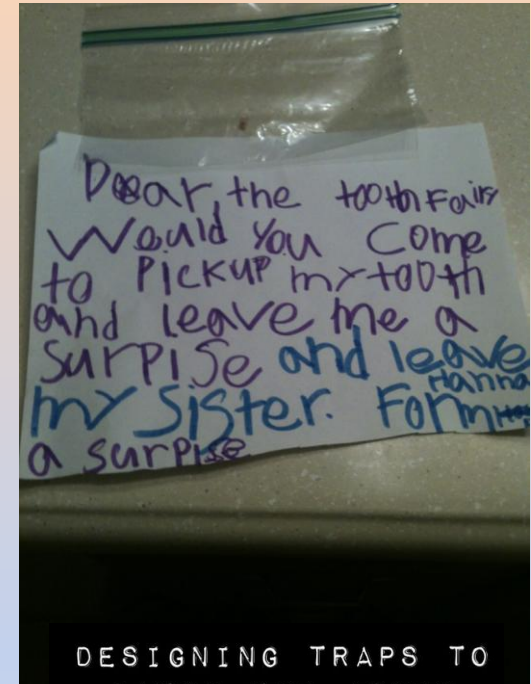
@Jessicawebb92  
firstcolleges

Making Children's Learning Visible. Celebrating their mark making and early writing attempts



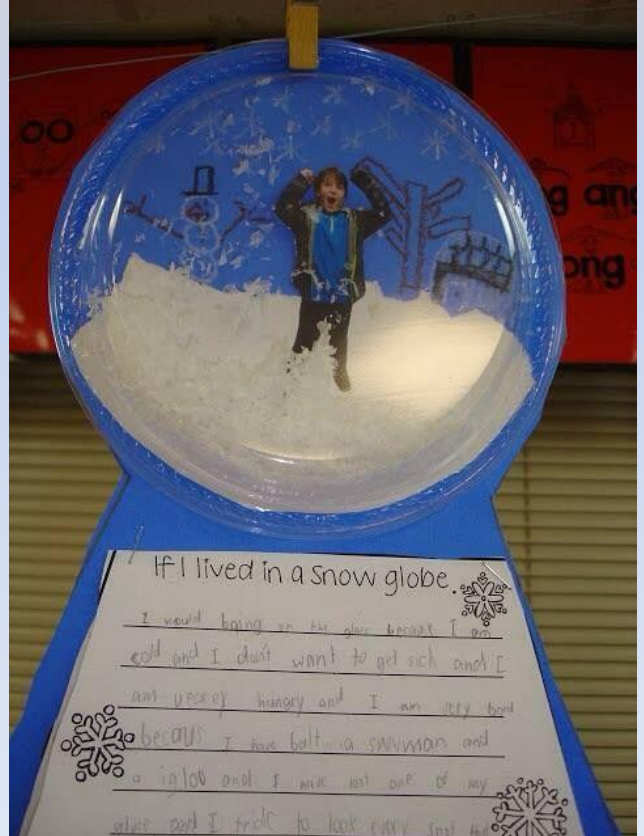
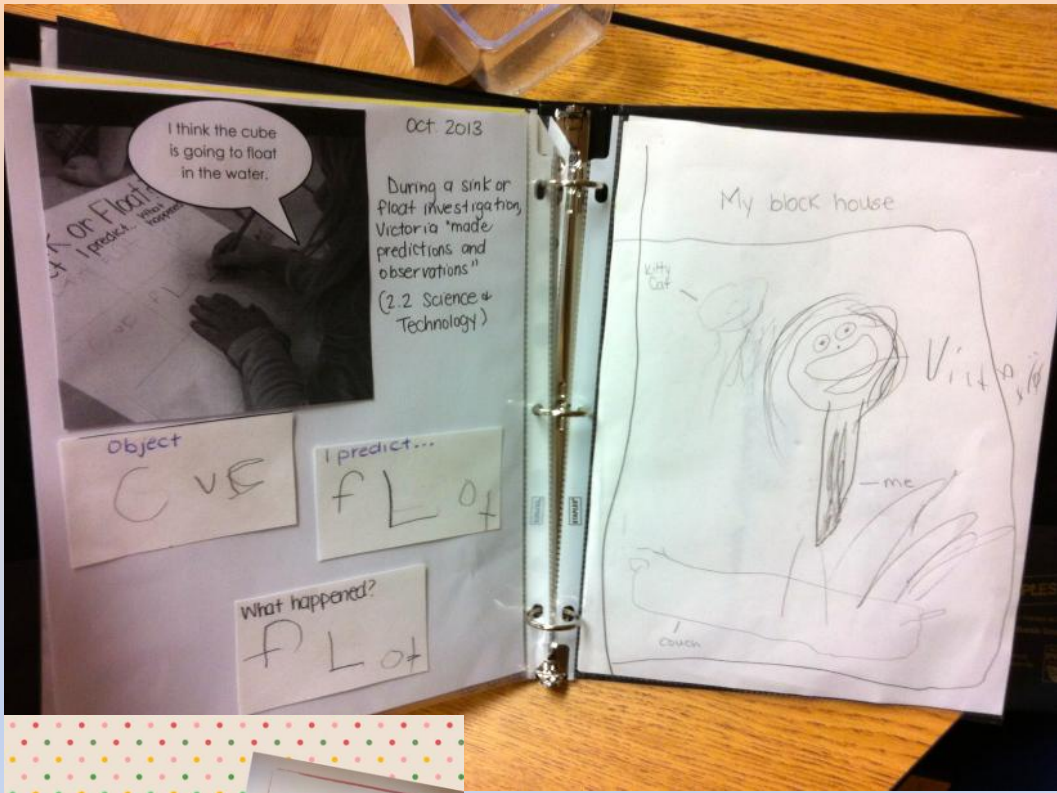


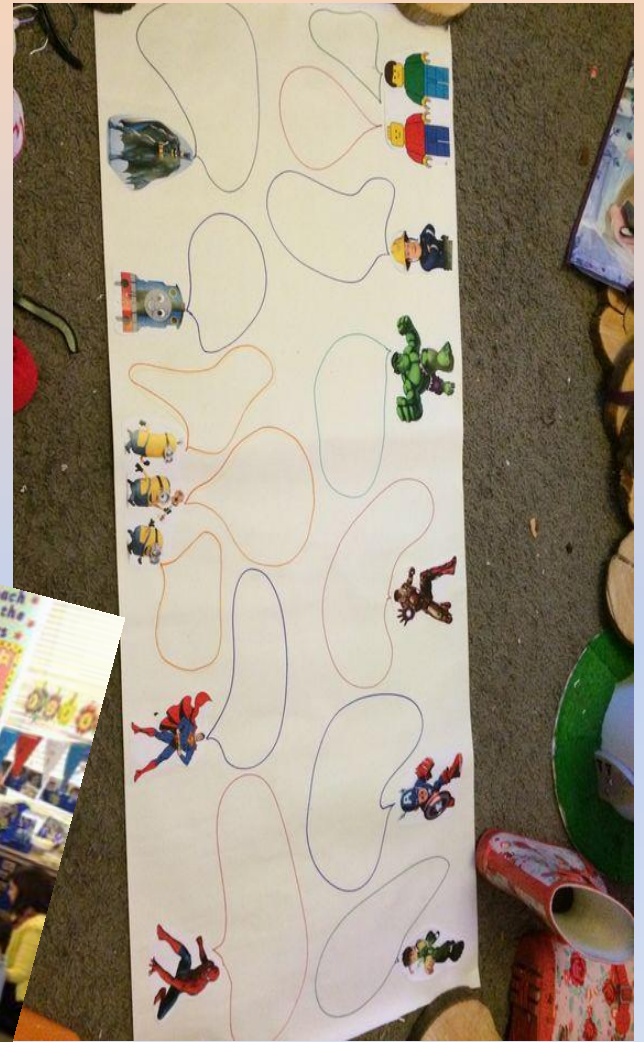
Plan activities that will motivate the children to want to write. Use their interests and ideas as starting points.



DESIGNING TRAPS TO CATCH THE JOKER







Wipe boards and pens for transferring skills



Promoting  
confidence and  
independence



# Cross-Curricular

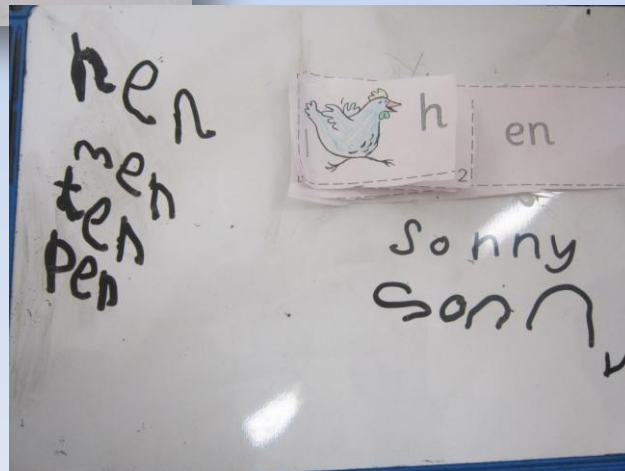
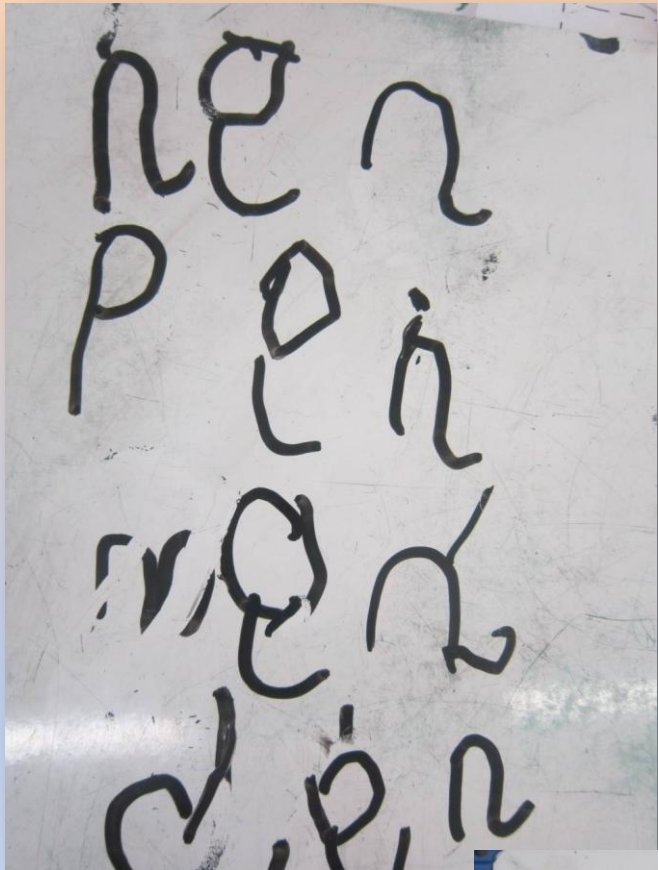
## PSED Skills: Independent application



Multi sensory Word  
Building  
Word wheels and split pins  
  
Transferring information -  
Writing lists

# Refining starting points and letter formation ...

- ✓ Recording rhyming strings and patterns in word-endings
- ✓ Applying phonic knowledge



Building and sounding  
outs words  
Phonic booklets

Writing rhyming lists

# Ideas for writing opportunities

- Self registering alongside the fruit: 'Have you had your snack today?'
- Clipboards, paper and pencils attached by string alongside the construction materials
- Shopping lists in the shop
- Calendars, forms and diaries in the home area
- Message table with telephone, notepad and pen to record messages.
- Resource the home corner with materials for children to make shopping lists, write messages, list jobs to be done, write notes for the milkman, and so on
- Help children to make pretend registers
- Encourage them to make badges, tickets and money as part of their play
- Encourage them to write signs and labels as part of their play, eg, 'the shop is open'
- In restaurant play areas, help them to make menus and price lists and model how to take orders



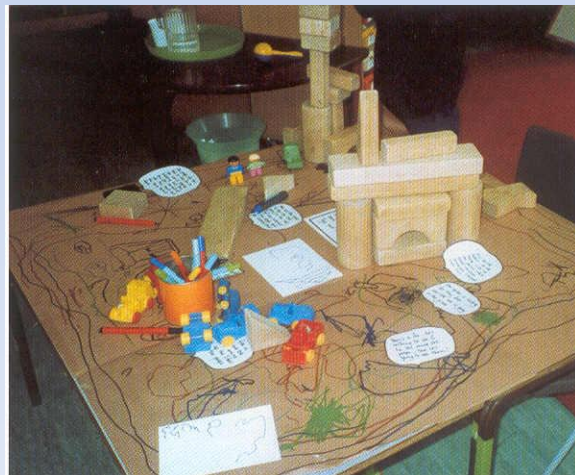


## Encourage written communication

- Encourage them to write instructions, such as 'this way to the sand'
- Support them to write letters and make cards for parents, friends and family members
- Provide message boards, post boxes and pigeon holes and model how to use them

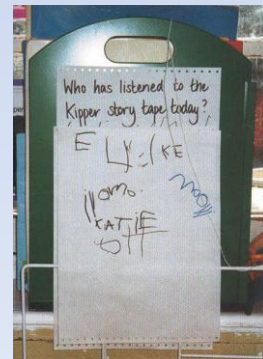
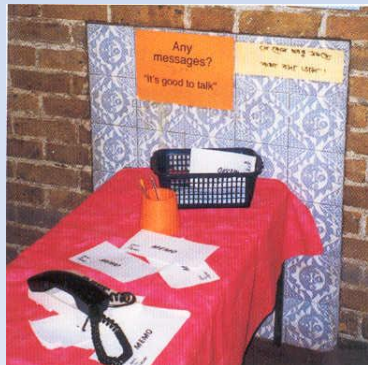
## Provide reasons for writing

- Encourage children to 'sign up' for child-initiated activities
- Write notices to which the children can make a response, such as, *who has made some cakes today? Sign here.*
- Provide clipboards in the construction and workshop areas so that children can record their ideas



# stimulate children's writing

- **Secret messages** (hide them in special places – could include problems to solve, challenges, requests, etc.)
- **Invitations** (hold a teddy bears' picnic and invite parents/carers, etc.)
- **Posters** (to advertise a summer fair or other event)
- **Making own books** (concertina alphabet books, favourite nursery or number rhymes, shared big books, information/topic books, etc.)
- **Comic strips** (speech bubbles, etc.)
- **Recipes** (prior to or after a cooking activity)
- **Shopping lists** (to buy ingredients for the cooking activity)
- **Rules/instructions for games** (children could invent their own games)
- **Maps/plans** (could be related to a story, e.g. "Bears in the night")
- **Listening to music** (ask children to make marks as they listen to a piece of music)
- **Signs/notices** (draw children's attention to ones around them and in the local environment)
- **Menus** (e.g. for a restaurant/café in the imaginative area)
- **Outdoor opportunities:** maps/routes, recording investigations (have clipboards available), scoring for games or counting laps on wheeled vehicles, road signs, writing associated with all role-play activities, etc.



## Time to reflect...

- When do your children see YOU writing?
- How often do you talk to them about what you are writing?
- What things do you do to encourage the children to notice in writing?
- How often do you talk with them about WHY people write?
- What opportunities do the children have to write?
- Where do they choose to write?
- What do they choose to write?
- How do you resource writing opportunities?
- What do you perceive to be an independent writer?

