

Ideas to help with reading, writing and maths

You can help your child's learning every day, by supporting and encouraging them and being excited by their learning. Here are some ideas to keep them developing their literacy and numeracy skills at home.

Year 7

Reading at home

Make reading fun

- Play card and board games and do complicated puzzles
- Help your child to follow a recipe and cook for the family
- Encourage your child to read and follow instructions for playing a game, making or using a piece of equipment, or completing a competition entry form.
- Remember their reading doesn't have to be a book – it could be a magazine, comic, newspaper or something from the Internet.

Here's a tip - talk a lot to your child while you are doing things together. Use the language that works best for you and your child.

Talk about it

- Ask your child to talk about parts of a story they liked and why
- Talk about the key facts, characters, plot, setting, theme and author's purpose
- Have them retell the main ideas or describe characters, events or facts they were interested in
- Ask them to show you where the story supports their thinking
- Be a role model. Show you read for a variety of reasons; eg to compare products advertised in brochures, to be informed on current issues, to find a phone number or a bus timetable, to relax etc
- Try reading the same book as your child so you can talk about it together
- Talk about the TV show you are watching. What were the main ideas? Talk about the order events happen in – practising this skill is important as children can find this difficult to learn. What did they like/dislike and why?

Here's some tips - encourage your child to read every day. Make reading fun and praise your child's efforts, all the time.

Help your child to link stories to their own life. Remind them about what they have done when a similar thing happens in the story.

Read to your child

- Just because your child can read doesn't mean that they don't enjoy listening to someone else reading. It could be a non-fiction book on a topic they like, a magazine, a newspaper, a short story or a longer book read in instalments. It could also be a more difficult book/article that your child needs your help to read and understand
- You could also listen to audio stories together – you can borrow these from the library or download from the internet
- Encourage your child to read the lyrics to their favourite songs, waiata or haka. Talk about why the composer wrote the song. What were they trying to say? Search the internet for more information

Here's a tip - keep the magic of just listening to a good story alive by reading either made up, retold or read-aloud stories – with lots of excitement through the use of your voice.

Keep them interested

- Find books or magazines about your child's interests. Reading about their favourite sport, player, team or kapa haka group or an issue they are interested in will help them to be an expert on a particular subject
- Find books that relate to TV shows or movies they know, or the area they come from. Knowing some of the ideas, characters or ancestors/tīpuna before you start reading can make it easier to understand a book. Talk about how the book differs from the TV show or movie and how it builds on what they already know
- Join the library and visit regularly to help your child choose books that interest them – you may want to encourage your child to read different types of books including non-fiction stories.

Here's a tip - be positive whenever your child is reading, no matter what they are reading. Respect your child's opinion as it shows they are thinking about what they read.

Writing at home

Make writing fun

- Encourage your child to listen for and use interesting words. Having a wide range of words will help your child create stories which will increase in complexity
- Use technology. Text messages and emails are a form of writing even if the language is not always standard English
- Use computers if your child isn't keen on writing. They don't have to think about the presentation of their work and editing does not require a complete re-write. Spell-check helps, too
- Play card and board games and complete difficult crosswords and word puzzles
- Create a message board such as a white board, blackboard or pin board. The messages might be instructions, reminders, or praise for a job well done, as well as examples of work. Encourage your child and other family members to respond with messages, too.

Here's a tip - make writing fun and use any excuse you can think of to encourage your child to write about anything, any time.

Talk about writing with your child

- Talk with your child about their day. Talking helps them to organise their thinking and is an important first step for any writing
- Talk about new words your child is not familiar with, using a dictionary to find out more – there are dictionaries online
- Be a positive audience for your child. Always respond to the effort behind the message and the message content first (regardless of how the message is written) and the presentation second. Keep in mind what your child is currently learning to do and comment just on that
- Keep a holiday journal. Before the holidays ask your child to write a list of possible activities they want to do that keep to your budget and get them to draw up an activity plan. Remember to include any events or activities you have to attend; e.g. school camp, noho marae, church, doctor, sports training, family/whānau reunion. Your child could write a list of what to pack.

Here's a tip - talk about what your child writes. Be interested. Use it as a way of starting conversations. Listen to your child's opinion, even if you don't agree with it.

Keep them interested

- Encourage your child to read. Reading and writing are linked and success in one is likely to lead to success in the other
- Buy interesting stationery for your child to use. Coloured pens and pencils can be an incentive to write together with special paper or books. Give a diary, book or notebook as a present
- Plan for them to be able to use a computer for writing – at home or the library
- Look for real reasons for writing. Encourage your child to read and write letters, messages, postcards, invitations, lists, rosters, thank-you notes, recipes, emails. Start with postcards to family and friends – encourage your family to write back
- Make lists for a particular reason; eg shopping lists or jobs to be completed

- Encourage your child to write on their own - on paper or on the computer. Poems, songs, waiata, short stories or a diary or journal. A journal can be a way for your child to keep track of their thoughts, ideas or a particular interest. For example, keep a journal of their sports training, kapa haka practice or compile favourite recipes
- It might be fun to write to a favourite author or kaumātua to ask what helps them to write their stories and compositions.

Here's a tip - be a great role model. Show your child that you write for lots of reasons, eg replying to an email, writing a shopping list, invitation or letter, writing for your work or your own study. Use your first language – this helps your child's learning, too.

Mathematics at home

Talk together and have fun with numbers and patterns - Help your child to:

- talk about sales in town – 25% off, 30%, 10%, half price. Look for the best value and make a game of calculating the savings on items your child is interested in
- identify and describe how 2D shapes have been moved within kōwhaiwhai and tukutuku panels, and how 3D shapes have been moved in carvings
- budget pocket money and/or plan ahead to open a savings account. Talk about earning interest and investigate which bank account will give them the best return for their money
- talk about current prices for items that interest your child and investigate which store offers the best price.

Here's a tip - being positive about mathematics is really important for your child's learning – even if you didn't enjoy it or do well at it yourself at school. Encourage your child to find out more about mathematics at the library and on the Internet.

For wet afternoons/school holidays/weekends - Get together with your child and:

- play games – find a new board or card game that uses strategy
- plan and budget the family holiday (or a day trip) – look at the best transport method in terms of time and money, accommodation, and activities to do. Use the Internet for finding the information
- guess how many times you use your cell phone a day/week/month and predict the cost. Work out the best price, pre-paid versus a plan
- play travel games – invent mathematics games to play while walking with friends, travelling in the car, at the park
- plan for a family event, like a dinner. What is the cheapest option – cooking at home or getting takeaways?
- make bead necklaces and friendship bracelets – calculate the cost of the materials needed and the time needed to make them. Is it cheaper to just buy them already made?
- play outdoor and indoor games – Frisbee, touch rugby, netball, kilikiti, cricket, soccer, bowls, snooker and darts
- build a fort – plan, design, collect the materials and build it.

Here's a tip - the way your child is learning to solve mathematics problems may be different to when you were at school. Get them to show you how they do it and support them in their learning.

Use easy, everyday activities - Involve your child in:

- cooking – explore recipes and amounts of food and costs within a budget when catering for larger numbers eg school camp
- revising times tables – check with your child/their teacher which tables you could help your child practise
- investigating which supermarket offers the best deal on petrol eg 10 cents off a litre.

Year 8

Reading at home

Support their learning

- Help your child gather newspaper, magazine and journal articles for a topic of interest at school. Help them find information on internet sites.
- Talk to your child about what they have been reading on the Internet. What have they learnt? What questions do they still have? Where else could they find information that would be useful?
- Talk to your child's teacher about available books and resources that relate to your child's interests
- Read through your child's homework tasks and questions together and talk about what they are planning to do to finish the homework
- Play card and board games as a family. Increase the challenge – it really helps children's learning.

Here's a tip - be a great role model. Let your child see you enjoying reading – whether it's the newspaper, a magazine, a comic, a cook book or a novel. Read magazines, newspapers and books in your first language.

Read together

- Read your child a children's novel that they are interested in – try one or two chapters each day
- Get your child to listen to younger siblings doing their reading homework (this is a good chance for them to practise some of their own reading skills)
- You can remind them about pausing while the younger child thinks about a word they don't know, giving them help to work out the word, and giving them praise for their reading, too
- Have books, magazines, comics, newspapers and other information available for everyone in your family to read on topics that interest your child – eg skateboarding, surfing, fashion
- Listen together to CDs and mp3s of your child's favourite stories, books and songs.

Here's a tip - be positive whenever your child is reading, no matter what they are reading. Respect your child's opinion as it shows they are thinking about what they read.

Hunt out things to read

- Take a trip to the library and help your child to find books, audio books and magazines that they will enjoy reading – eg books about their favourite musician, movie star, sports celebrity or other role model
- Find books or magazines that tell stories about who your child is and where they have come from
- Find a difficult puzzle book to work on together
- Read and talk about advertising signs you see – talk about how the company decided on the words and the design, and who they are trying to appeal to with the advertising
- Use a map to find directions for a trip you are going on, or follow the journeys of people on travel and adventure programmes
- Get some instruction books from the library on how to plan for and make food, gifts, or toys, for family birthdays, Matariki or Christmas. Work through the instructions with your child
- Find some recipes together that your child might like to cook for a family treat. Be there to help your child as they read through the recipe, get all the ingredients and create the final result.

Writing at home

Write for a reason - Help your child to:

- write a letter or an email to a newspaper editor, radio announcer or television broadcaster sharing your child's opinion on a topic of interest in the news
- start a blog/wiki on the Internet and get your child to record thoughts about their day to share with their friends and family
- write a proverb, family motto or pepeha and illustrate it with images from the Internet or photo albums

- develop a spreadsheet on the computer to record the progress of your child's sports team or kapa haka group (or one they follow), including games played, performances given, penalties, scores, player/performer of the day
- start a writing journal to record trips and weekend activities
- take some photos using a digital camera and write a picture book for a younger child using the photos
- write a comic using drawings and graphic design to present an idea or story
- make some birthday cards, thank you notes or letters to friends and family.

Here's a tip - be a great role model. Show your child that you write for lots of reasons, eg replying to an email, writing a shopping list, invitation or letter, writing a story about your early life for your child to read.

Make writing fun - Get together with your child to:

- play strategy games and do word puzzles like word search puzzles and crosswords
- make the weekly shopping list using supermarket flyers and find all the bargains and savings to fit the budget
- write some descriptions for items you may wish to sell using the Internet
- find out about some of your family history (whakapapa) and/or family stories (pakiwaitara) and record these stories to share with other family/whānau members.

Here's a tip - make writing fun and use any excuse you can think of to encourage your child to write about anything, anytime.

Talk about writing with your child

- Ask them about a piece of writing they are doing at school and/or for their homework
- Tell them about some writing you are currently doing – a letter, a poem, a list for the holidays, a scrapbook, something you are doing for work or study.
- Help them to use dictionaries and thesaurus (both paper and Internet versions).

Here's a tip - talk about what your child writes. Be interested. Use it as a way of starting conversations. Listen to your child's opinion, even if you don't agree with it.

Mathematics at home

Talk together and have fun with numbers and patterns - Help your child:

- find and connect numbers around your home and on family outings, eg read the odometer on the car to see how many kilometres the car can go on a tank of petrol. Get them to note how much it costs to refill, then work out how much it costs per kilometre
- talk about sales in town – 15% off, 33%, 20%, half price. Look for the best value. What would the price of the item be after the discount? Is it better to buy two items and get one free or get 25% off the price of the items?
- budget pocket money and/or plan ahead to open a savings account or reach a savings target. Talk about earning interest. Calculate what interest would be earned using different savings schemes
- work out the floor area of your home, sports stadium or whare nui – how many square metres is it?
- talk about goals and plan ahead to budget for items for themselves or for others
- do complicated number puzzles.

Here's a tip - the way your child is learning to solve mathematics problems may be different to when you were at school. Get them to show you how they do it and support them in their learning.

Use easy, everyday activities - involve your child in:

- planning to help make a dish or a full meal for the family or even a community event at the hall or marae – working out the cost of making it at home versus buying it already made, planning the preparation and cooking time – and focus on the ingredients and the amounts of fat and sugar, too.
- planning what proportion of their own, or their brother's and sister's, time should be spent on tasks (like homework, sleep, TV, sport, kapa haka) to make sure there's time left for fun and family
- watching documentaries, which are full of facts and information using mathematics

- reading the newspaper to find articles or advertisements featuring graphs or tables

Here's a tip - talk with your child's teacher to understand what they are learning in mathematics and what the learning is in the homework they're doing.

For wet afternoons/school holidays/weekends - get together with your child and:

- play games – find new card and board games that use strategy
- calculate the chance of their favourite team winning the tournament. Investigate how many points they need and work out what their competitors need as well
- play outdoor games – skateboarding, Frisbee, touch rugby, kilikiti, cricket, soccer, pétanque, netball
- plan and perform a rap, dance or waiata a ringa and draw up the outline of the dance steps on graph paper
- make a present or gift for someone using a scrapbook, kōwhaiwhai, quilting, doing tivaevae, collage, painting, carving, knitting, sewing or carpentry
- plan for when you have saved \$10/\$20/\$30 – what would be the best use of that money for a day out?

Here's a tip - being positive about mathematics is really important for your child's learning – even if you didn't enjoy it or do well at it yourself at school.