

## Simple advice on helping a young child to write...

Writing is a very complicated skill and we should not forget this! On the one hand, children have to come up with ideas of what to write and on the other hand they need to know how to form letters and words.

**From speaking to writing:** The most important prerequisite for knowing how to express our ideas in writing is knowing how to speak. If children can't tell us their ideas, they are never going to be able to write them down! So, we can help our children in writing by allowing lots of practice in conversations!

**Sharing Books:** Books are a great way to introduce children to the printed word. If reading books is a part of our child's daily experience, he will learn that ideas can be written down and shared with other people. He will also see how writing is organised and how stories are told. And he will probably learn all of this while enjoying a cuddle with his favourite people!

**Making their mark:** Long before they can write words or even draw recognisable pictures, most children go through a phase called 'mark-making'. This involves making marks with pencils, sticks, fingers, paint, in short almost anything on any surface. Praise this 'writing' and pretend it means something!

**Be a role model:** Children like to imitate adults and, at this age, love being involved in 'proper' jobs. Involve your child in making shopping or things-to-do lists. Birthday cards and little notes are also great writing opportunities for young children.

**I can write my name:** Draw your child's attention to his name as it is written on pictures, on his wellies, on lunchboxes etc. Slowly he will start to recognise his name, or at least the first letter. At around 4, he might start to show an interest in writing that first letter and later the rest of his name.

**Developing physical coordination:** Encourage the development of fine motor skills - cutting and sticking using child-sized scissors and glue. Writing is much easier for children who have really learned to control their hand and finger movements - so all that craft work really pays off!