

Helping you help your child

ACTIVITY BOOK / ENGLISH



department for
education and skills
creating opportunity, releasing potential, achieving excellence

Open Doors



Introductory Activity

Goal

This activity will help your child to recognise different types of writing (form) and say why they are writing (purpose) and who they are writing for (audience). This gives us consistency of form, purpose and audience each time.

You will need:

- four or five examples of real texts, e.g. advertising fliers that come through the door, catalogues or junk mail that encourages you to send for things, articles such as news items from magazines or free local newspapers, letters from the letters page in a newspaper etc.
- the 'Form, Purpose, Audience' guide, sheet number 1

What you need to do

Together with your child, read each of the pieces in turn and talk about any words or phrases they don't understand. Then for each piece, decide *What kind of writing is it? (form). What is it for? (purpose). Who is it for? (audience).* Make a note of what you find out.

Reminders

Remember that some pieces of writing can have more than one purpose. For example, an advert from a double glazing company might be trying mainly to encourage you to buy windows from them rather than from anyone else (*persuasion*) but might also include some information and a diagram informing you how double glazing works (*explanation*).

Check points

The language used gives lots of clues to the *purpose* and the *audience*:

- **what kind of language would you expect to find in an advert? What about a newspaper report of a fire or an accident? What about a recipe?**
- **what tense are the verbs in? (e.g. past, present) Underline them to check**
- **which pronouns are used? (Pronouns are words used instead of a noun or name, to avoid repetition, e.g. you, we, our, my, he, she, they, it, its.)**

If your child wants to, they could...

challenge you to see which of you can find a piece of writing with a form or purpose or audience that you haven't discussed yet. Or they could collect and sort all the junk mail that arrives during a week or two and see if there are any forms or purposes that crop up more than once.



(X and Y
have a row)

PLOT

STORY

Activity A

Identifying storylines

Goal

This activity will help your child to understand how stories can have several plots or mini-stories running alongside each other at the same time. It will also help them with note-making: deciding what are the most important points and discarding the rest of the information.

You will need:

- to watch an episode of their favourite soap with your child
- a pencil and some paper to jot down brief notes

What you need to do

Before watching the episode – talk about recent storylines, or plots, in the soap they have chosen. For example, there might be a storyline that is all about a secret that one of the characters is trying to keep from the others. Or perhaps two characters have had an argument and others are trying to help them sort it out. Maybe there's been an accident. Sometimes soaps have short storylines that only last a few episodes, and others that go on for months, such as *What happened to Lisa?* Each storyline is like a mini-story within the main story.

While watching the episode – together try to identify two or three main storylines in this episode and help your child to make very brief notes that will help them remember them, e.g. X and Y have a row. Y threatens to move out. P tells Q he has seen him with the missing money.

After watching the episode – discuss the episode with your child. Did you agree what the storylines were? Ask them what they think will happen next in each of the storylines they noted, and get them to write down their predictions. Using “I wonder what would happen if...” type questions is a good way to encourage them to make thoughtful guesses. They will soon find out if they were right!

Reminders

Remind your child to use abbreviations when making notes, such as initials for the characters' names.

Remind them not to try to write down everything that happens, just something about each 'mini-story' within the episode you watch.

Encourage them to ask questions and express opinions about why the characters have behaved as they have. Soaps provide a way into discussing particular issues such as right and wrong, telling the truth, being loyal to friends etc.

Check points

- **your child can practise and improve their note-making by reading a piece of text, such as an article in a comic or newspaper, and underlining a limited number of key words or phrases. Suggest they set themselves a goal such as *I'm going to underline the 6 most important phrases and no more.* This will really help them to decide what's important and what isn't**
- **another good way to get better at note-making is to draw simple pictures instead of writing words. For example, ask your child to choose something they know how to do, such as how to play a favourite game, or how to make a sandwich, and see if they can draw it in 5 or 6 simple quick pictures.**

If your child wants to, they could...

draw each of the storylines in the soap like a timeline, so they can add in what happens over the next few weeks. Do any of the plots join up together? They might want to think about the various plots in a book they have enjoyed reading, and talk about them with you or their friends at school. Can they draw a map or diagram showing how the characters in their favourite soap are related to each other and how they are linked by friendship or work?

Activity B

Developing a dialogue

Goal

This will help your child with writing dialogue and conversations in plays and stories. It will also give them practice in taking a piece of writing that someone else has started, and creating their own version of it.

You will need:

- two copies of Sheet number 2, which shows one side of a telephone conversation between two characters. It only tells us what one of the characters, Chris, is saying
- a pencil or pen

What you need to do

The half a telephone conversation is part of a new drama series for children's television. This drama needs to be exciting and will include a mystery to solve. You and your child have to decide on a second character and write the dialogue that this character speaks, responding to what the first character, Chris, has said. Read aloud what Chris says and discuss what sort of plot or storyline it suggests. You and your child can both then write the other character's replies, so that when you have finished you will have two different telephone conversations. Take turns to read each other's, and talk about which parts of the conversations worked best to give it an air of mystery or suspense.

Reminders

This dialogue is written like a play script, so there's no need to use speech marks. Remember that in real telephone conversations, people sometimes interrupt each other, or pause, or say things like "Mmm...yeah".

When discussing what could be happening between Chris and the second character, you and your child can ask each other "What if..." "Supposing..." "Perhaps it could be..." questions, so that you come up with lots of different ideas between you.

Check points

- **the dialogue you and your child write for the second character needs to follow on and take account of what Chris has said**
- **have you both included stage directions to show the reader or actor how you want the words to be spoken?**

If your child wants to, they could...

turn this into a complete play. They would need to write more scenes, and would probably need to invent some more characters. Would this be how the play starts, or might there be an earlier scene before this one? How would the play end?



how? why? who?

Activity C

Looking for clues: being a reading detective

Goal

This will help your child with working out (deducing) what the author wants them to know, using the information given. It's like being a reading detective: they have to look for clues in what the author has said. Afterwards you will both have a go at inferring, that is, working out things that the author hasn't said in so many words, but would agree with. (Inferring is like reading between the lines.)

You will need:

- the 12 pictures of Jim the artist on Sheet number 3, the paragraph about him and the 12 months of the year
- a pair of scissors

What you need to do

Cut out each of the 12 pictures and the 12 months. With your child, read the recount of Jim's year, and talk about which picture shows what Jim looked like in January. Try to work out (deduce) together which picture goes with which month, and why. When you have sorted it all out, talk about anything you can infer about Jim, that is, what sort of person do you think he is? This will mean re-reading the information to see if there are clues about him, or things you can guess even though the author hasn't told you in so many words.

Reminders

Remind your child to keep re-reading to check the information and to look for evidence for their ideas. Tell them not to be afraid to try out different ways to solve the problem. Suggest that they move the pictures around if it helps, or sort them to begin with so they are sure of the differences between them.

Check points

- read the information carefully, sentence by sentence
- is there only one order the pictures can go in?

If your child wants to, they could...

make up a story about Jim. How exactly did he get that scar? Why did he cut off his own ear? Or they might want to make up some imaginary entries from Jim's diary. These would need to be written in the 1st person, e.g. I've decided to grow a moustache so I don't have to bother shaving every morning. My new earring is still hurting – I wonder if I should get the doctor to look at it?



DEDUCING

invent a puzzle

Activity D

Invent a puzzle: giving the reader clues

(This activity needs to be completed after Activity C, 'Deducing information from a recount'.)

Goal

This will help your child become even better at deducing when they read because they will be deciding what *they* want *their* readers to deduce, or work out from the information they give them. Together you will be inventing a puzzle or a problem to solve.

You will need:

- the 12 outline pictures of Jim the artist's house – sheet number 4
- the 12 months of the year from the last activity
- pencil or pen and paper

What you need to do

Together with your child, decide on 11 changes that Jim the artist might make to his house, and note them down, 'numbering' them February to December. They will need to be obvious, such as changing the front door, adding a window or chimney, putting a fence round the house, planting a tree, installing a dog kennel, adding shutters or a porch or a sign. He might also decide to chop the tree down, leaving a stump, or remove some of the shutters but leave one pair. When you've agreed on the 11 changes, you can start to add these changes to your house pictures, leaving the first house as it is so it can represent the house in January before the alterations began. Remember to add in *all* the changes Jim has made to each subsequent picture.

Once you've got your 12 pictures your child can start to write their recount of what Jim did to his house over the course of a year. However, they don't just want to tell

their readers what he did each month, that's far too easy! They want to make readers deduce it for themselves. Look back together at the last activity and re-read the recount about Jim's appearance. Discuss with your child how the author gave you enough information to work out what had happened, without telling you exactly. Then your child can do the same for the house changes. For example, if they've decided that Jim put in a dog kennel in March when he got a dog but removed it in July, they might write *Sadly Jim's dog died after only four months so he gave the kennel away.*

When the recount is finished, cut out the 12 pictures and suggest your child gives them, the recount and the 12 months of the year to a family member or friend. Can they deduce what Jim did to his house when? If so, you have made an excellent puzzle together.

Reminders

Remind your child that they can use a variety of time phrases, such as *two months later, by April, after three months, at the end of the year* and so on.

Check points

- check that all the information given to the readers corresponds with the changes in the pictures
- when your child thinks they've finished their recount, try it out sentence by sentence to see if it really works

If your child wants to, they could...

try to invent another puzzle like this. Perhaps they could change the audience and make up a simpler one for younger children, with just five or six changes.





Activity E

'Buy my pizza!': creating a persuasive flier for a pizza delivery company

Goal

This will help your child to practise planning and writing persuasively. They will also be using their imagination to invent magical properties for some pizza toppings.

You will need:

- a pencil or pen
- paper

What you need to do

Imagine that a new pizza delivery firm has opened up near you – but one with a difference. This one is owned and run by staff who have graduated from the Wizzo Witches' and Wizards' Catering College. The toppings they use on their pizzas have special magic powers. Your child's job is to design the advertising flier that will be delivered to all the homes in your area, telling everyone how delicious the pizzas are, but also explaining that they offer the chance to have temporary magic powers if certain toppings are ordered.

Start by reading and discussing a flier from a real pizza delivery firm if you can find one: they often put them through letterboxes to advertise themselves. Then, with your child, look at Sheet Number 1, the 'Form, Purpose, Audience' guide and discuss the form, purpose and audience of this piece of writing that they are going to do. The form is already decided on: they have been asked to design a flier, so it will be just one piece of paper. They can choose whether to fold the paper to give four sides to write on, or not. Then agree with your child on the purpose and audience.

They will need to plan the flier carefully. Firstly, they will want to use a particular kind of language if it is to be successful, so spend some time thinking up and discussing some words and phrases that might encourage people to try these new pizzas. Secondly, they have to invent the magic powers that are associated with various toppings. Suggest they jot down some ideas and see how they look and sound. For example, you could suggest they could use alliteration and have *Tasty tuna tempts your tastebuds and turns you into a ten metre tiger! Succulent sweetcorn sends you swooping through the skies on a silver broomstick!* Listen to their ideas, discuss them with them, and together choose the best. Keep all the rough ideas until they are ready to turn them into a flier.

Reminders

Don't let your child forget to plan the layout of the flier. They will need to put in a phone number for people to ring up and place their orders. What will they call this pizza delivery company?

Check points

- can your child remember important points about this kind of writing that is advertising a product?
- they may want to use different sized lettering and different fonts for the various sections of the flier to make it eye-catching

If your child wants to, they could...

invent some other food products that students learn to make at the Wizzo Catering College, such as sweets and drinks, and design the packaging. They might choose to write a story based on the adventures that happened as a result of eating some of the magic toppings.



Wizards'
Catering
College

FORMAL LANGUAGE



Activity F

'Dear Sir/Madam': writing a letter of complaint

(This activity needs to be completed after Activity E, Creating a flier for a pizza delivery company.)

Goal

This will help your child to write letters that require more formal language, and to take account of the prompts they are given.

You will need:

- a pencil or pen and some paper
- a formal letter, if you have one you can share with your child

What you need to do

Together with your child, read and discuss a formal letter you have received: perhaps something from the council, a bank or a mobile phone company. Any letter from a business will do, as it will be laid out in the correct way for a formal letter. Together you need to look at things like where and how the address is written, how the letter starts and how it ends. Ask your child to make a note of any formal language that is used, any words or phrases that we don't use in everyday conversation. Encourage them to ask you to clarify any words they don't understand.

You and your child need to imagine that you have ordered and eaten a pizza with the special magic powers toppings. Either the magic didn't work at all or it went wrong: your child can decide. They are angry and disappointed and decide to write a letter of complaint. Before they start, look at the 'Form, Purpose, Audience' guide, to make sure they know exactly who the letter is to go to. They already know the form and the purpose. Give your child time to think about what they want to say, and to talk over their ideas with you. If you have written a real letter of complaint before,

you might have some useful tips for them.

Ask them to write a draft of their letter, then go through it with them to make sure they have explained themselves clearly and that the language is formal.

Reminders

Remind your child that in their letter they can say how cross and disappointed they are, but they shouldn't be rude, as it won't get them anywhere! They might want to ask for a refund, or compensation. If so, they should explain why they think it is justified.

Check points

- **is the letter properly laid out, with the address and date in the right place?**
- **have they kept the language formal?**
- **did they start and end the letter in the correct way?**
- **have they written in paragraphs?**

If your child wants to, they could...

write the reply that they imagine they might receive. As an alternative, they could imagine they decided to phone and complain instead. In this case you and your child could play the parts of the person complaining, and the owner or cook from the pizza firm, each responding to what the other one says. Your child might like to write this out as a telephone conversation, as in Activity B.



FACT or OPINION



Activity G

Fact or opinion?

Goal

This will help your child to be clear about the difference between facts and opinions. As they grow up, it's important that they learn to be able to distinguish fact from opinion, for example when they are studying history or science, but also when they are watching the news or thinking about things that happen around them. They need to know what the facts are, so they can decide what their opinion is.

You will need:

- copies of 'Facts and opinions' cards for you and your child
- a pencil or pen

What you need to do:

Both of you have a blank 'Facts and opinions' card. You each decide on a subject that you know a lot about, and write this at the top of the card. It could be a family member, a sportsperson, a team, an animal, a chocolate bar, a car, a place, a hobby, a game... Then you both fill in the two 'facts' boxes and the two 'opinions' boxes on your cards. Opinions are what people think about a subject. The facts must be true, but the opinions can either be yours, or other people's opinions that you don't actually agree with. When you have both finished, take turns to test each other. Ask your child to read out the name of their subject, then to read out their four facts and opinions, in any order, without saying which is which. You have to say which you think are facts, and which you think are opinions. Then you test them using your card. Before completing any more 'Facts and opinions' cards, discuss with your child how to choose facts that are not too obvious, or people will know straight away that they couldn't be opinions. For instance, if my subject was Horses, I wouldn't want to write as my fact Horses have 40 teeth because this sounds just

like a fact, and doesn't sound at all like an opinion so my opponent will easily guess that it's a fact. Instead I might say *Horses can be trained to do lots of things*. This is still a fact, but most people would probably have to think for a minute before they were sure that it was.

Reminders

Remind your child that they need to be certain that the facts they use are true. The game works best if you can make your opinions *sound* as if they could be facts – if you can do this, it is harder for your partner to guess which is which. Changing just one or two words can alter a fact into an opinion. For example, *United are the **most successful** team in the Premiership* is a fact if they have won more matches than any other team, but *United are the **best** team in the Premiership* is an opinion, however many games they have won, because some people prefer another team.

Check points

- **your child will have to think very hard about the words they choose, so allow plenty of thinking time**
- **suggest they jot down several facts about their subject before they decide which two to write on their card**

If your child wants to, they could...

make more cards, and create a collection to test out on their friends and family. They could also choose an article from a newspaper, magazine or comic, such as a match report or a piece about a pop star, and underline all the facts in one colour and all the opinions in another.





LOGICAL
THINKING...

CLUES



Activity H

Guess my word game

Goal

This game will help your child to use logical thinking to work out (deduce) something from clues they are given.

You will need:

- a pencil or pen
- some paper

What you need to do:

Ask your child to choose who will go first. The first player writes down a secret word, which they keep covered. They tell their partner how many letters are in the word, and whether it is a noun, verb or adjective (as a reminder, nouns are naming words, such as table, dog, bowl; verbs are active words, such as talking, eating, flying; and adjectives are descriptive words, such as colourful, loud, friendly). Their partner then guesses another word in the same class (i.e. a noun if it's a noun, a verb if it's a verb etc.) with the same number of letters in it. So if my partner told me their secret word was a verb with 7 letters in it, I might guess *running* or *sliding*. The player with the secret word tells their partner how many letters they got right, if any, and where in the word they were, e.g. *You got the 2nd and 4th letters right*. The second player tries to make use of these clues to work out what the word could be, and makes another guess. Play continues in this way until the secret word is correctly guessed, when players swap roles.

Reminders

Remind your child to write down each of their guesses, and to tick off the letters that you tell them are in the right place, so they can keep track of which letters they are getting right. This will make it much easier to work out what it could be.

Check points

- **encourage your child to think about which letters often go together. If you know that the secret word has *h* as its second letter, it's likely to begin with *ch*, *th* *sh* or *wh***

If your child wants to, they could...

play a harder version of this game, where you don't say which class of word it is. Or they could play an easier version for younger children, with three letter words that all have a vowel in the middle.



SPELL -ING

ST...
O

Activity 1

First and last game

Goal

This game will help your child with spelling, and also thinking of longer and more unusual words that they know. They can play this game against you, if they like a competition, or collaboratively if you and they prefer to help each other.

You will need:

- a pencil or pen
- some paper, preferably lined, so the words don't get muddled

What you need to do

Together choose a longish word of 8 or 9 letters, and each write the word down the left hand side of your lined paper. Write the same word down the right hand side, but with the letters in reverse order. Both players then try to think of a word with as many letters in as possible, which will fit between the first and last letters on each line. Players score points for the longest word on each line. Example of the layout, using the word *playtime*:

P
L
A
Y
T
I
M
E

E
M
I
T
Y
A
L
P

Words that would fit here include *loom*, *yoghurt*, *terrifically*, and *memorial*. If proper names were allowed, you could also have *Anansi* and *India*.

Reminders

Remind your child to try out words by jotting them down – it might spark off another idea when they see it. Suggest that they think about which letters tend to go together in spelling, as this will help too. For example, if the last letter needs to be g maybe a word ending in *-ing* could be used.

Once you've played this a few times, you and your child might like to think about whether there are certain letters which will be very tricky to make a word from if they are at the beginning or the end. Are there any letters that are particularly easy?

Check points

- **encourage your child to use a dictionary, if you have one, to help them with spellings. They will discover all sorts of interesting words that will help them win games like this one!**

If your child wants to, they could...

make up a simpler version to play in their head, with four letter words, for instance. This will certainly help them to develop a good memory, and improve their spelling. It's a good game to play when they're somewhere with nothing to do, such as waiting for a bus.



TMTS PRS CHCBSC

TXT

6 FRTS FRST YOGS
SOSSRLLS PLNCRSPS

Activity J

Text message 1

Goal

This will help your child improve their spelling, especially knowing which vowels to use, and it will also help them develop their powers of deduction.

You will need:

- a pencil or pen
- scrap paper
- sheet number 5

What you need to do:

Imagine you and your child have gone to the supermarket to do some shopping, but when you get there you find you've left the shopping list behind. Luckily, someone at home saw it and sent you a text message of the shopping list. Can you and your child work out from the text what you are meant to buy, and can they write it out properly?

This activity was about *reading* a text message. What about *writing* them? Decide on a message of one or two sentences and see which of you can write it out as if it were a text message using the fewest letters. Make sure it can still be understood!

Reminders

Suggest that your child tries saying the message out loud to see if that helps. When they send a text message people often leave out the vowels and sometimes the spaces. Which words could belong together?

Text messaging is all about deciding what is important, and needs to be left in, and what is less important and can be left out, rather like note-making.

Check points

- think about which vowels are most likely and try out the resulting words on a scrap of paper

If your child wants to, they could...

make up some more items and try them out on you. Are you getting better at working them out?

PRS CHCBSC

6 FRTS FRST YOGS
SOSSRLLS PLNCRSPS
LGTOMKTCHP

MISSING VOWEL

Activity K

Text message 2

Goal

This will help your child to improve their spelling, especially knowing which vowels to use, and also their powers of deduction.

You will need:

- a pencil or pen
- scrap paper
- sheet number 6

What to do:

Once again imagine you are out with your child. You have been texted a list of jobs to do and things to buy, but it has been sent in a hurry and you have no idea which shops you will need to go to. Can you and your child work it out together and write it out in full?

When you have finished, write each other another text message to decipher.

Reminders

Remind your child to try saying the words out loud to see if that helps. When they send a text message people often leave out the vowels and sometimes the spaces. Which words could belong together? Are there any connections between the words that could help you guess what the others might be?

Check points

- try the words out on a scrap of paper

If your child wants to, they could...

turn all sorts of pieces of writing into text messages. What about a text-messaged get well card, or recipe, or nursery rhyme? Can they turn a paragraph from the newspaper or from their reading book into a text message?

