

Tips for Parents/Carers to help with READING and WRITING

Engaging the struggling or reluctant reader

What are some things that you as a parent / carer can do to support your struggling and/or reluctant reader and writer? Here are a few ideas to help you on your way...

On a day-to-day basis

Practice, practice, practice

Writing takes practice! Let your child see you write often and encourage your child to write often, too.

At home writing might include emails, instant messaging, thank-you notes, writing a shopping list (get them to help you!), diaries and calendars, what's-for-dinner notes, reminder notes, crosswords and word puzzles.

Try writing for different audiences

Encourage your child to expand their range and abilities by writing for many different audiences. For example, if they have younger siblings they could write a short story for them, or perhaps, do competition entries, writing birthday and Christmas cards, joining a fan club or doing a book review.

Make language fun

Have fun with language yourself and share that sense of enjoyment with your child. Point out new words and phrases you come across in the newspaper or on the radio, share favourite song lyrics. Karaoke can be great fun and is a good way for those who are reluctant to read to do so without feeling too much pressure. You could get creative in naming a new pet or in writing gift cards. You could also play word games together such as Scrabble, word Uno, Boggle and word hangman.

Offer your child many opportunities to read

Offer your child a wide variety of opportunities to read, both educational and entertaining, and pass on your own favourite authors, novels, and magazines to show them you're a reader, too. Discuss the things you've both read.

Encourage your child to examine different styles of (and reasons for) writing

Encourage your child to compare the styles of different authors, and to compare how a newspaper editorial may be different than a website or an instruction manual.

Encourage your child to pursue forms of writing that interest them

If your child has found a form of writing that they enjoy, encourage them to pursue it whether it's poetry, letter writing, writing song lyrics or keeping a diary. Perhaps it's doing a report or Power Point presentation or some research on a favourite football team or pop group.

Encourage your child to write about personal thoughts and interests

Encourage your child to use writing to think more deeply about things in their life, questions, problems, difficult assignments, hobbies, and topics they want to learn more about. Writing regularly in a diary may provide a valuable outlet and space for them.

Make sure your child has what they need to write

Support your child by making sure they have adequate materials for writing (sufficient paper, pens, pencils, etc.), as well as a quiet place to work. If your child must write an assignment on a computer and you don't have a computer at home, check computer availability at your public library. In addition, provide them with a dictionary in order to look up meanings and spellings of new vocabulary, and help them learn how to use it.

Take your child to the library

Help your child obtain the resources needed to complete any writing assignments by taking them to the library, especially if they are working on a research report (many students will be facing their entry levels and GCSE exams and will be undertaking research assignments). Some resources may be available online, but many will also be available at the library.

Communicate with your child's teacher

Here at Westhaven, both teachers and the support staff team are on hand and are only too willing to advise, discuss and help to find ways that you can support your child's efforts at home.

Final thought

Reading and writing does not come easily to many students, but with patience, both the school and your support, you may find that it comes a little more easily to your child than it used to!

Happy reading and writing together!