



# *Helping your child at Home:*

*Some tips for helping your  
child in the Prep year.*



As parents, you are your children's first teachers.

Once your children begin their formal schooling, you continue to be a really important part of their learning. You are able to reinforce so much of what the children do at school in a one to one, personal way. You may find that you already do most of the suggestions in this booklet, you may find new ideas, or new ideas may occur to you as you read through. One thing is certain – together, as parents and teachers – we can support children to be and achieve their best.

# Reading:



Reading is about **making meaning** from print. Successful readers use a range of information when reading, including their:

- Knowledge of how our language is spoken and the way it fits together (structure)
- Previous experience and understanding of the topic (meaning)
- Knowledge of letters and sounds and how they are represented in print (visual information)

Rather than relying on one source of information, such as only sounding out words, they use their knowledge of language and what they are reading about, as well as the way words look when reading.

**Successful readers** expect what they read to make sense and are encouraged to predict what is coming up. They correct themselves when something does not make sense.

## How can you help?

**Special Time:** Make a special time away from distractions to read together each day. Reading together should be a comfortable, happy routine where you and your child enjoy books together.

**Involve children in choosing books:** To help children to get an idea of what the book may be about, encourage them to:

- Browse through the book
- Talk about the pictures (“What story do the pictures tell you? What do you think is happening?”)

**Get to know the book:** When settling down to read together, spend time getting to know the book first:

- Talk about the cover and the title
- Say the author and illustrator names
- Look through the pictures and discuss what the story might be about
- Recall the storyline or favourite part if reading this story for the second (or more!) time – rereading favourites is part of what good readers do.

## Reading to ... Reading with... Reading by...

Share books in a variety of ways: reading to the child, reading with the child and reading by the child.

Depending on the kind of book being read and its degree of difficulty, you will need to decide whether it will be read to, with or by the child.

- Reading to the child shows how reading works – you are demonstrating what you do when you read and showing that reading is an enjoyable and desirable activity.
- Reading with the child occurs when you join together to share the book (especially with favourites!) This is very satisfying for the child who gains confidence and sees themselves as the reader.
- Reading by the child – listening to your child read the book by themselves (e.g. their take home book)

## How else can you help with reading?

Reading at home should be fun and build the confidence of the child as a reader, so:

- Praise all reading efforts (especially if meaning is maintained, don't worry about mistakes and NEVER HIDE THE PICTURES!)
- Talk with your child's teacher for more information about how they teach reading.
- Reread familiar books (even Take Home Books)
- Read signs, recipes, labels etc with your child (at home, in the car, at the supermarket etc)
- Borrow books from the library (Libraries often have a story time session organised after school and on weekends)
- Give books as gifts
- Encourage care of books – have a space for books in your home and or in the child's room.
- Tell stories (children love to hear stories about when you were a child – or make up stories about the child)





# Writing.

Writing is about **making meaning** with print (handwritten or with electronic print). Successful writers are able to record their thoughts or information using:

- Knowledge of how our language is written (structure)
- Previous experience and understanding of the topic (meaning)
- Knowledge of how letters and sounds and how they are represented in print (visual information)
- Know that each time they read their writing, it will mean the same thing (e.g. a recipe or a story stays the same)

**Successful writers** think about what they want to write, who they are writing for and what is the purpose of their writing. They are able to form letters correctly and, over time and with much practice, develop an individual and efficient writing style and have spelling strategies to help them in writing known and unfamiliar words.

## How can you help?

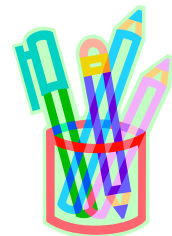
**Special Writing Time:** Encourage your child to have some frequent writing time.

- Have a special writing kit ready for them - equipped with writing paper or a scrapbook and some implements (pencils, textas, crayons letter stencils etc)
- Encourage children to write stories, their name, others' names, labels from packets, simple sentences using known words
- (e.g. make their own story based on a Take Home Book - "*I like to play with my \_\_\_\_.*")
- Practise letter formation (see letter formation sheet) - especially writing their own names and those of family members



- Encourage grandparents / friends to write simple letters for your child to receive in the mail - help your child to respond to the letter writer
- Label pictures (e.g. a picture of the family, their room)
- Write an account of a family outing or visit
- Write down simple sentences your child tells you (e.g. I like eating spaghetti) to be copied or traced over
- Help your child to write lunch orders, letters to the teacher etc

Aa Bb Cc Dd Ee Ff Gg Hh Ii Jj Kk Ll Mm

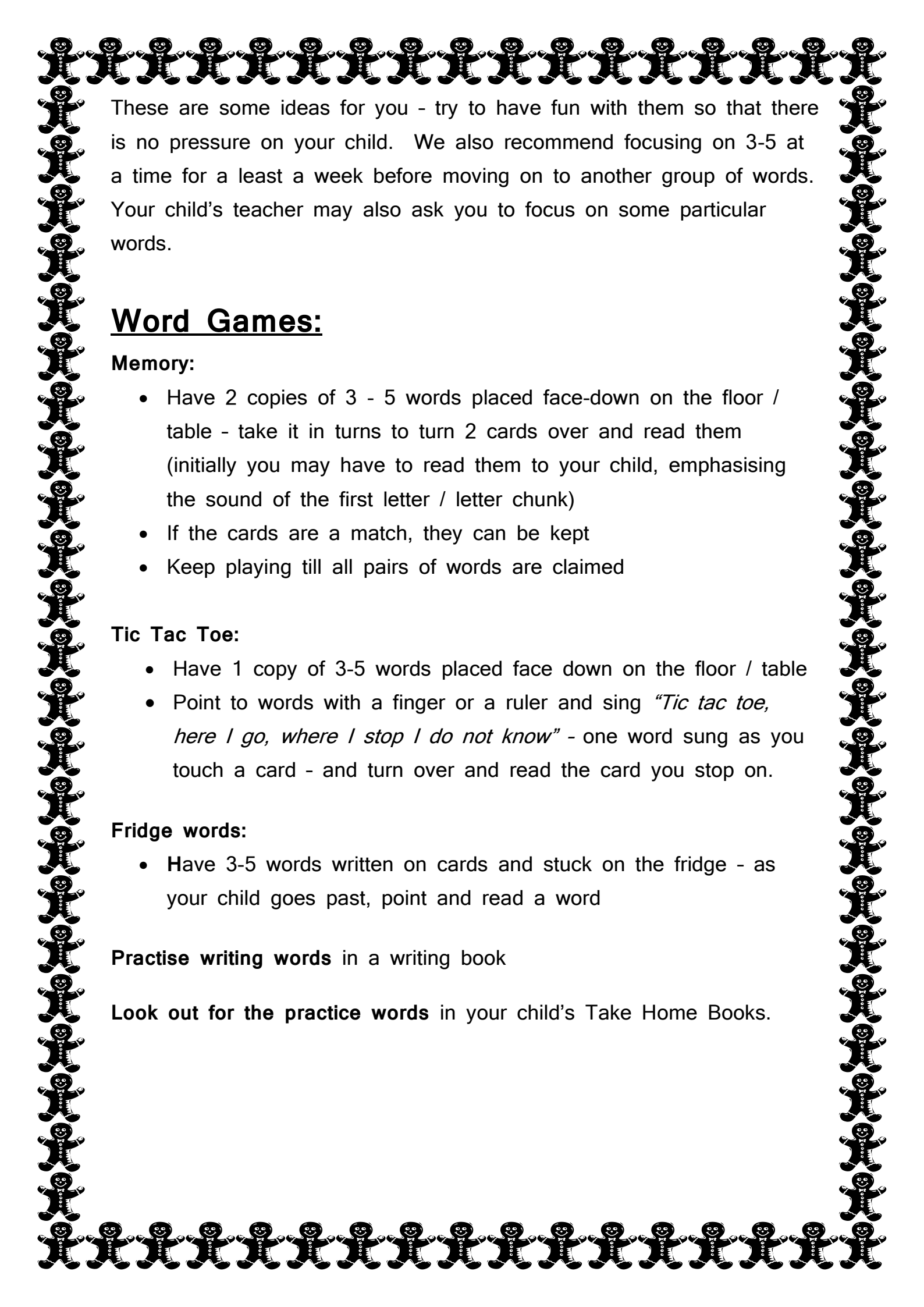


As children begin to make connections between letters and their sounds and that they can hear sounds in words and write the corresponding letters, children also start recognising simple words which occur frequently, especially in their Take Home Books. These words are referred to as high frequency words, sight words or commonly used words.

Exford uses lists of these words, grouping them in sections depending on when children usually learn to read and write them. It is important that children learn to read and write these words automatically, so that during reading and writing, they don't get stuck on words that form the backbone of English - instead they can focus on recording their thoughts or read through a text and focus on the meaning.

### How can you help?

We have provided a list of words for the next term. There are lots of ways that you can help your children to practise reading and writing them.



These are some ideas for you - try to have fun with them so that there is no pressure on your child. We also recommend focusing on 3-5 at a time for at least a week before moving on to another group of words. Your child's teacher may also ask you to focus on some particular words.

## **Word Games:**

### **Memory:**

- Have 2 copies of 3 - 5 words placed face-down on the floor / table - take it in turns to turn 2 cards over and read them (initially you may have to read them to your child, emphasising the sound of the first letter / letter chunk)
- If the cards are a match, they can be kept
- Keep playing till all pairs of words are claimed

### **Tic Tac Toe:**

- Have 1 copy of 3-5 words placed face down on the floor / table
- Point to words with a finger or a ruler and sing "*Tic tac toe, here I go, where I stop I do not know*" - one word sung as you touch a card - and turn over and read the card you stop on.

### **Fridge words:**

- Have 3-5 words written on cards and stuck on the fridge - as your child goes past, point and read a word

**Practise writing words** in a writing book

**Look out for the practice words** in your child's Take Home Books.

# Speaking and Listening



Supporting your child's **Speaking and Listening skills** is something you can do anywhere: at home, in the car, on your way to school ... Successful speakers are able to share their thoughts or information using knowledge of how our language is spoken (structure). For young children, their grasp of the way English is structured takes time to develop as it is a complex language: e.g. learning that we say: "I jump / I jumped" but "I ran" not "I runned").

**Successful speakers and listeners** think about what they want to say, who they are speaking to and what is the purpose of their speech – are they asking for something, sharing information, answering a question, retelling a story or solving a problem.

## How can you help?

- Engage your child in speaking and listening as much as you can
- Ask questions which encourage your child to add detail to simple sentences, rather than yes / no questions – e.g. "Mum / Dad, I saw a dog over there." Ask questions about what the dog looked like or where it might have been going or what it might like to eat for dinner (Some good question starters which encourage more detailed answers are: "*Tell me ...*" and "*What do you think about ...*")
- Ask your child to retell stories read or listened to and to retell movies / shows watched
- Talk about things you do together and use subject specific language – e.g. simple cooking activities – say mixing bowl, cup of, tablespoons etc
- Encourage the child to describe the activity you do together.
- Sing songs and chants
- Play spoken language games



# Mathematics



Supporting your child's **Numeracy awareness** is something you can do anywhere: at home, in the car, on your way to school...

Simple counting and number awareness can happen when doing family / household chores such as setting the table or folding washing at home – “How many plates will we need to set the table?” “How many socks in a pair?”

## How can you help?

- Play counting games and sing number songs – lots of children's books have counting songs and games listed or ask your child's teacher to show you some
- Practise writing numbers – label pictures with numbers

## Look for opportunities to:

- Play counting games – e.g. the number of blue cars on the way to school.
- Sort items at home – e.g. buttons, that messy drawer at home (we all have one!) a pile of books – and have the child describe their reasons for sorting
- Tell simple number stories – e.g. “If I put out 4 knives and 4 forks, how many all together?” – initially encourage children to touch as they count to reinforce one to one correspondence – then encourage them to count using an array or number knowledge (e.g.  $4+4 = 8$ )
- Involve your children in simple cooking activities and count the number of ingredients – how many cups/tablespoons – how long to cook for.
- Tell the time using o'clock or half past – on analogue and on digital clocks
- Develop awareness of timetable / routines – e.g. on Wednesday nights we have swimming lessons, or Thursday is lunch order day.

