

## **Ideas for parents to educationally support their children at home.**

Rather than constantly writing him/her when referring to a child in this article, the masculine pronoun shall be used.

There are many things a parent can do to help their children that are free or inexpensive; all that is required is a bit of imagination, time and patience.

### **Reading.**

Read to and with your child. Children love being read to. Sitting with your young child on your knee, pointing out the words as you read aloud is a lovely way to give your child a positive attitude to reading. When your child no longer wants the closeness of sitting on your knee, sit beside them; ask him to read a few words or lines.

Children will recognise a word more readily if they have heard it before. Reading to your children enables them to access vocabulary that they cannot read themselves. They will be able to keep up with their peer group if you read them the books. Friends do not need to know who has actually read the books.

Show your child how to use a library. Do not panic if he chooses babyish books to read; far better for your child to read for pleasure than not at all.

If your child is used to being read to, when it comes to test or exam time and he cannot physically read all his notes in time for the exam dead-line, he will not think it odd if you help out by reading their notes. Encouraging your child to listen to you reading aloud will train them to listen. Discuss what you have read to ensure the child has understood and to reinforce his comprehension. These life-skills will be invaluable in the class-room/ lecture-theatre/ meeting.

Do not stop reading the bed-time story because you think your child is too old to be read to. If your child is happy for you to read to him, keep going. Your child will then be able to access books that he can intellectually cope with, but be unable to read easily. If he has set reading books for English, read the books to your child. This is not cheating; you are enabling your child to access the text. Often at bed-time when reading a story, you may be told if there are any problems at school etc.

If an older child is embarrassed at being read to; use audio books. Most libraries have an excellent range of audio books. Show your child the big-print range in the library, your child may find them easier to read.

Calibre Audio Library offers a free service to people with sight problems, dyslexia and physical disabilities. They offer a wide choice of books on CDs and MP3 discs, fiction and non-fiction for both children and adults.

[www.calibre.org.uk](http://www.calibre.org.uk)

Tel. 01296 432 339

Listening Books

[www.listening-books.org.uk](http://www.listening-books.org.uk)

Tel. 020 7407 9417

When your child is in secondary school and has set English books to read, obtain them in the audio book format. If children listen to the story first, they will find it so much easier to

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read the book. Amazon have a wide range of audio books at prices cheaper than most book shops. Have a look at [www.amazon.co.uk](http://www.amazon.co.uk)

### **Letters, numbers, spelling words and tables.**

Children will often have to write a word several times to learn the word. A dyslexic child may write a different spelling of the word each time, resulting in parent/teacher frustration. Rather than have the child write out a letter/word/number, have the child make it.

Make up an art box containing a selection of items with different textures, colours, smells to stimulate the senses. E.g.

- Sand-paper
- Pipe cleaners
- Glitter glue
- Crayola Creations Smelly Softies (felt-pens)
- Coloured pencils
- Pasta shapes
- Silver foil
- Metallic paper
- Fun-fur fabric
- Coloured paper
- Cutting out shapes from a magazine

A child can cut out the shape of the letter, listen to the parent say the sound and letter name, the child repeats the sound and letter name and physically makes the letter. The auditory, visual and kinaesthetic memories will be used to help retain the letter information. If writing the letter/word in a 'smelly' pen, then the sense of smell will also be utilized. The more senses used, the better chance the child has of remembering the information. The more fun the learning exercise, the more will be learnt and far fewer tears and tantrums.

Make the shapes of letter/numbers/words in cake/biscuit mix or bread. Once again the parent says the name of the letter, the sound, the child repeats the name and sound of the letter, physically makes the letter and then gets to eat the letter later on- a much nicer way to learn spelling words.

At bath time, the child can make letter shapes in bubble-bath or shaving foam. The parent can trace a letter on the child's back and vice versa.

Other techniques for reinforcing letters/ numbers and words:

Air-writing letters

Writing the letters in sand

Making collages of words using pasta, shapes cut out of magazines or comics

Make letters out of Play Doh or plasticine.

Tape yourself saying the letter sound, letter name and the child saying the letter sound and name. The child can listen to this over and over reinforcing the message. Children love to hear themselves on tape. Due to sound distortion through bone rather than air, a person never thinks they sound the same as when they hear themselves on tape. Children are fascinated by the difference and will listen to their voice over and over.

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Ask your children how they remember something that they think is important and harness their own techniques for remembering spelling. E.g. some people think in pictures or videos. This is where the parent has to use their imaginations to use the techniques that suit the child to help them learn spelling. Ask the child to think of a way to learn the spelling word using their preferred method. The child is more likely to remember the information if they are using memory techniques that they find easy to use.

### **Number**

When your child has Maths homework, it is easier for the child to have physical items to add and subtract rather than just using abstract concepts. Have a box of 'units' for the child to manipulate. They can be:

Lego

Coins

Matchsticks (available in bags from model making suppliers)

Dried pasta shapes

By using physical items and saying the name of the number aloud, the child will begin to associate the numerical symbol with a physical quantity. The older child can use different coloured Lego bricks for units, tens and hundreds or colour the pasta shapes different colours. Once again a bit of imagination helps make a lesson/homework fun and the information is more likely to be retained.

**Tables** are easier to understand if you make three piles of two pieces of Lego rather than expecting the child to remember  $3 \times 2 = 6$ . A child with a poor short-term memory will never be able to learn a long list of numbers in a table without understanding what tables are all about. Use physical items to teach the tables. The child can then understand that tables are merely numerical values which code for multiple piles of Lego!

**Time.** To teach time, buy paper plates and have the child cut out number shapes in different textured papers or write the numbers on the plates in different colours. Let the child decide which number should be which colour. The child can colour one half of the plate in one colour to represent 'after the hour' and the other half of the plate in another colour to represent 'to the hour'. Use lolly-pop sticks for the hands. Once again, saying the time out loud, the child repeating the time and physically moving the hands will make learning time more fun and memorable.

Swatch- Flik-Flak range of watches for children  
[www.swatch-shop.co.uk/flikflak.htm](http://www.swatch-shop.co.uk/flikflak.htm)

### **Games**

I-spy. Depending on the age of the child, you can play I-Spy words beginning with..... The older child can play I-Spy with words ending in ... and all combinations in between.

Rhymes. I am always amazed how well we remember nursery rhymes considering most of us never think of them from the time of learning until we teach our own small children the rhymes. Play rhyming games with your child.

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Tunes. Some people have a musical memory. Put telephone numbers, the alphabet etc to a tune.

Humour- People are more likely to remember something if it is funny. Ask your child to think up funny/rude mnemonics to remember spellings!

### **Memory Games.**

Dyslexic people have poor short-term memories. Try the following games to help train and improve the memory.

Kim's game- study a number of items on a tray for 30 seconds, cover the tray, recall the items.

The Minister's Cat- Take it in turns to describe the Minister's cat with adjectives in alphabetical order. E.g. Person one- The minister's cat is an agile cat. Person 2- The minister's cat is an agile, brown cat. Person 3- The minister's cat is an agile, brown, crazy cat. Etc.

Card games- take pairs of cards, shuffle the cards, and lay them face down. Players take it in turn to turn over two cards and try to make a pair.

### **General Tips**

If your child is really tired, there is no point trying to teach your child or expect him to do homework. Consider scribing; that way your child can give you all their ideas/ answers to Maths etc without using up precious energy writing.

Ask if the teacher would accept answers on a tape recording. Your child can speak all his creative ideas into the tape without being overwhelmed at the prospect of writing everything down on paper.

Do homework twenty minutes after your child has had something to eat and drink. You will find that they will perk up and be able to do their homework.

Try very hard not to lose your temper. As a parent after a busy day, it is easy to become bad tempered and frustrated when your child cannot seem to do the simplest task. Shouting at your child will not make your child be able to carry out the task required. Everyone will end up shouting and crying and no work will be done; far better to back off and leave the work until another time. Remember, your child has already had a day of frustration and embarrassment at school. Your child needs to feel loved and safe at home. The last thing your child needs is to feel a failure at home too.

## Ideas for parents to educationally support their children at home.

### Useful contacts, web-sites and addresses:

Meares-Irlen Syndrome-

[www.ceriumoptical.com/vistech.aspx](http://www.ceriumoptical.com/vistech.aspx)

Dorothy Crystal  
8, Rodney Street  
Edinburgh  
Tel: 0131 556 7836

<http://www.edinburgh-eyetests.co.uk>

Crossbow reading rulers and overlays

[www.thedyslexiashop.co.uk](http://www.thedyslexiashop.co.uk)

[www.dyslexic.org.uk/](http://www.dyslexic.org.uk/)

Excellent site for information on personalising your computer:

[www.abilitynet.org.uk/myway](http://www.abilitynet.org.uk/myway)

Children and Families-Psychological Services  
Westwood House  
498, Gorgie Road  
Edinburgh  
EH11 3AF  
Tel: 0131 469 2800

[http://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/info/561/schools-psychological\\_psychiatric\\_or\\_social\\_work\\_services/555/psychological\\_services/1](http://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/info/561/schools-psychological_psychiatric_or_social_work_services/555/psychological_services/1)