

Activities to get everyone writing at home



This pack contains activities and resources to get your children writing at home.

If you are a teacher, please use the activities below and visit our **teacher support page** to sign up for a free trial of Power English: Writing.

**Teacher
support page**

If you are a parent, please use the activities below and visit our **parents support page** to find helpful tips to get your child writing at home.

**Parent
support page**

Talk and write about the good old days

No books at home? No problem! Use these idea generation techniques and get talking about your favourite family memories. You can then write them up as an anthology of memoirs that you can keep forever.

You might also want to think about who you can share them with once they're finished.



One of the best ways to generate ideas for a memoir is to ask yourself questions like these:



- What are my earliest memories?
- How far back can I remember?
- What are the most important things that have happened to me in my life so far?
- What have I seen that I cannot forget?
- What has happened that shows what my family and I are like?
- What has happened that shows what my friends and I are like?
- What has happened that show what my pet(s) and I are like?
- Is there something that happened to me at home that I'll always remember?
- Is there a time when I had a feeling that surprised me?
- Is there an event that changed how I think or feel about something?

- Is there an event that changed my life?
- Has there ever been a time or place that I was perfectly happy?
- Is there a time or place that I laughed a lot?
- Is there a time or place when it felt as if my heart was glowing?
- Is there a time or place when it felt as if my heart was breaking?
- Is there a time with a family member/carer that I'll never forget?
- Can I remember a time I learned to do something, or did something for the first time?



Find your spark with a 'Spark Line'

Finding a spark line is a great way of generating ideas for writing. While you're all reading, write out any lines you really like (they can be from a book, poem, or anything else you're reading about actually).

When you think you've got enough, pick your favourite line and turn it into something new. I will often 'watch my thoughts' as I read for this reason because anything can be a spark to set you off on a writing adventure!

Do some 'dabbling' while you're watching the tele

Watch. Doodle. Write. This is a great writing technique for those who aren't big on reading. While you're watching the tele, you can be doodling anything that comes to mind. After a while, you'll have enough there that you can begin to pick your favourite doodles and turn them into a piece of writing. When you're done, think about who you might like to share your writing with.

Nature poems on the pavement

Pick up your notebooks and get outside. While you're out and about, choose an object (e.g. a tree) and list five ordinary words to do with that object. Then make each word into a poetic line.

Alternatively, write down five things you see when walking outside. Choose one and list five ways it could seem human or animal-like. Once you've got together some good poems, publish them by writing them out on the pavement outside your house or school using chalk.

Take five ideas

Choose a natural object (e.g. a tree). List five ordinary words to do with the object. Then make each word into a poetic line:

- *TRUNK* – serious and silent, sturdy and strong
- *BARK* – crusty and dusty, hugging history to itself
- *LEAVES* – whispering secrets to the breeze
- *BRANCHES* – curious fingers exploring the sky
- *RINGS* – the life of the tree in layered lines – the story goes full circle.

Try personification

Write down five things you see when walking outside. Choose one and list five ways it could seem human or animal-like:

- *PLANT POT* – like a cupped hand, taking good care of the flowers
- *TREE ROOT* – keep a close eye on it – I'm sure I saw it slide through the earth towards us
- *LEAVES* – looking up, I see thousands of little umbrellas doing their best to keep us dry
- *SEA SPRAY* – Rising up – out of stones – like horses
- *SEAWEED* – It lies across the rocks like forgotten mermaids' hair



Interview someone over the phone

Phone someone up that you love but cannot see at the moment and ask them to tell you a story from their life. Then write it up as a piece of *people's history*.

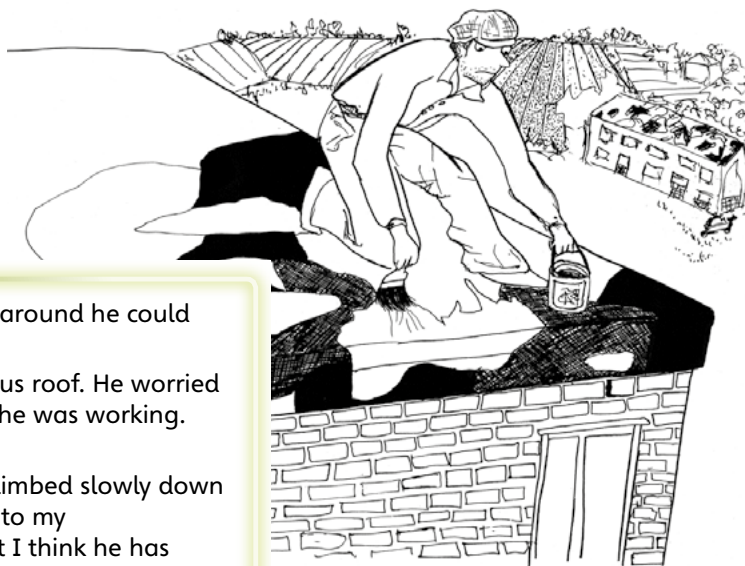
Once written, send it off to someone else to read and ask them to do the same thing.

The daredevil painter

Lots of people are scared of heights, but not my great-grandpa. His name was Robert Linton and he was born in London into a poor family. At the age of 14 he had to go out to work to help support his 11 brothers and sisters, so he got a job as a painter. This is the story of something brave he did in the Second World War.

Robert stood out at work because he would do things no one else dared to do. One day he was told to climb to the top of a very tall building and paint the roof with camouflage paint so that the enemy planes would not spot it and drop a bomb on it. The building was important because it was a factory where fighter plane engines were made.

Although it was dangerous, Robert knew he had to go, and so he began climbing the ladder. Up and up he climbed, with a huge heavy pot of paint and a brush in one hand.



At last he got to the top, and when he looked around he could see all over London. It was a wonderful sight.

Straight away, he started painting the enormous roof. He worried that an enemy plane might fly over him while he was working. Fortunately, this did not happen.

After five hours the job was finished, and he climbed slowly down again. The factory was never bombed, thanks to my great-grandpa. Of course, I never met him, but I think he has passed his daredevil genes on to me.



Interview someone

Make sure you know where they were and how old they were when their story happened. You could ask questions like these:

- Can you tell me one story from your childhood?
- Do you have an interesting story from your school days?
- Can you tell me a story from when you were at work?
- If you would like to, can you tell me a sad story from your life?
- What is your happiest memory?
- Do you have a cheeky story or one that will make me laugh?
- Can you tell me about something that changed your life?

It might be useful to video or record them telling their story to help you remember it. Make sure you ask whether it is okay to do so.



Here are some drafting rules that can help you write happily and quickly

When I'm teaching about writing, I like to share my drafting 'rules'. These are things I do when I'm writing at home that help me to write happily and quickly. You can use them too.

If something is not quite working in your piece, don't worry! Put a line under it and come back to it later. Don't know how to spell a word? Don't sweat! Use a temporary one, put a circle around it, and look it up later. Don't know what to write next? Don't panic! Share your writing with someone at home and come up with an idea together. Not sure if you need to use some punctuation? Put a box where you think it might need to go, keep writing, and you can come back to it later.

Finally, think you've finished your piece? Great! It's time to start another!

Drafting rules

Got a sticky bit or a yawny bit?

- Put a line under the bit you are unsure about
- Carry on

Don't know how to spell a word?

- Invent the spelling
- Put a circle around it
- Carry on

Don't know what to write next?

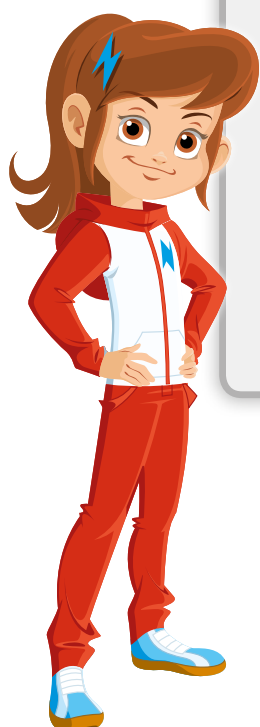
- Read it to a partner
- Get your partner to ask you questions

Not sure of punctuation?

- Put a box where the punctuation might need to go
- Carry on

Think you have finished?

Start or continue with a personal writing project!





Tips from The Writing For Pleasure Centre

Here are some top tips from The Writing For Pleasure Centre on writing for pleasure.

Top Tips

The best things you can do when helping a child write:

- Devote time to it. Make it a quality experience. Show your own interest and pleasure.
- See yourself a fellow writer—take part in writing alongside and offer sensitive support when asked. You're not there to police and correct but to engage in writing yourself, too. Share your own ideas, ask your own writing questions, and, importantly, talk as you craft texts together. You don't need to be a 'good' writer but you do need to write.
- Allow children to choose what they would like to write.
- Remember that children can continue with some old writing or start something new.
- See talking and drawing as *planning* and encourage taking things from the reading, video games, play, film, or the television programmes that they like.
- Encourage using 'temporary' spellings whilst drafting, as this is a strategy used by real-life writers. Writing happily and socially is the key to success here.



The Writing For Pleasure Centre
- Promoting research informed writing teaching

What *not* to do when helping a child to write:

- Don't look over your child's shoulder all the time and criticise.
- Don't rush the experience or try and get it all done in one day.
- Don't ask children to write something they haven't chosen for themselves.
- Don't control their writing.
- Don't stop to correct errors immediately; insisting on 100% accuracy while they are trying to get their ideas down for the first time.
- Don't ask a child to write without talking and writing together.
- Don't leave out time for reading what you've written to each other and giving your responses.

Here are just some of things you can write together:

Riddles, rhymes, songs, jokes, poems, signs, labels, lists, charts, booklets, games, recipes, instructions, how to guides, everything I know about... letters, anecdotes, vignettes, true stories, invented stories, comics, fairy-tales, myths, experiments, letters, scripts and plays.

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