



# Helping at Home



*Supporting your child's learning!*

**Halcombe School  
2014**

# HELPING AT HOME

At Halcombe School, we think teaching your child at school is like coaching your child in a sports team. When your child is on the field, the coach is in charge. The coach does the teaching, introduces new ideas and knows what each member of the team needs to learn and work on.

Coaches have been trained to do their job. We want parents to be the cheerleaders on the sideline, supporting the children and the coach, while giving the children opportunities to practice what they have learnt at home!

## *Helping Your Child with Reading*



*"As parents, the most important thing we can do is to read to our children early and often. Reading is the path to success in school and life. When children learn to love books, they learn to love learning."*

Laura Bush

## Handy Hints for Helping Younger Children with Reading at Home

- Expect that your children will become successful readers.
- Let your children see you reading. Children learn by example. Boys especially, need to see their Dads, Uncles and Grandads as people who enjoy reading. Children need to believe that reading is 'cool'. Show them that you value and enjoy reading.
- Share a reading time of 10-15 minutes each day.
- Choose a time that suits both of you, not when the potatoes are boiling or your child's favourite TV programme is on!
- Find a place to sit together where you are comfortable and relaxed, at the table, on the couch, on the deck, under a tree, or in bed.
- Talk about the book together then listen to your child read. After the reading, talk about it again.
- If your child is not enjoying success in reading, contact his/her teacher so we can work together. We will also keep in close contact with you. Learning to read needs a partnership between home and school.
- Focus on what children can do, not what they can't do yet.
- Don't stop reading to your children as they get older.

*At Halcombe School, teachers read to children every day.*

### What to do when your child isn't sure of a word

- WAIT 5 – 10 seconds. This is usually the hardest thing for parents to do. Try not to offer any help at the start. Often your child will work out the word on their own. Children need time to 'think'.
- After waiting, use these prompts:
  1. Read to the end of the sentence.
  2. Go back to the beginning of the sentence then read on to the end.
  3. Look for a clue in the picture: 'Can you see something in the picture which starts like that?'

4. Look at the first letter(s) and think about what word would make sense.
  5. Sound out the word or break it up into chunks. 'Can you see a part of the word that you know?'
  6. Tell your child the first sound.
  7. Tell your child the word.
- Don't use all of the prompts every time. Choose prompts that suit the context of the story.
  - Remember not to take the enjoyment out of reading. Encourage your children to take risks and have a go, so they can learn from their mistakes. It's okay to make mistakes – that's how we learn.

### **Helping Older Children**

- Read your children's books so that you can talk to them about their reading.
- Encourage your children to read every night.
- Listen to your children read.
- Encourage your children to read the newspaper to find information for you.
- Have TV free days.
- Have a computer game/Playstation/TV-free time on weekends. Let your children choose the time.
- Take your children to the library. Borrow books and story tapes.
- Set up a bookshelf in your child's bedroom.
- Buy books for presents, both fiction and non fiction.
- Look for 'Top 100' bestseller lists in bookshops, to find popular books and authors.
- Seize opportunities! If your child gets excited about a topic, find books about it together.

*Children don't learn to read so they can read a book - they learn to read by reading books. If you want to get better at something, you must keep practicing! The time you spend sharing the books that children take home will make a big difference to their reading.*

# *Helping Your Child with Writing*



*The single most important thing that parents can do to help children with their writing, is help them with their reading!*

## **Focus on the good things your children can do.**

Praise their efforts, and emphasise the successes. Children's willingness to write is fragile, so your optimistic attitude is important.

## **Children find writing a challenge.**

They need lots of encouragement and praise. When they show you their writing, focus on **WHAT** they are writing, because that's the most important thing. Writing is like a jigsaw. It's made up of lots of little bits, but it is the big picture that counts – the **ideas and impact** the writing has on people who read it.

## **Writing skills develop slowly.**

For some it comes early, for others, a little later on.

Occasionally, their writing may even seem to go backwards. Nonetheless, with your help and encouragement, your children will certainly progress.

**The basis of good writing is good talk.** Build a climate of words at home. Tell stories. Go places and see things and provide experiences so that your children have interesting things to write about. Talk about what you've seen and what it was like. Talk through ideas with your children. If they can't say it, they can't write it.

**Expect your children to succeed.** It's best not to tell your children that you were no good at writing or spelling at school – that might be so, but it sends the wrong message to children. ('Dad says he can't spell, so it doesn't matter if I can't!')

**Let children see you write.** If children never see adults write, they think writing only happens at school. What you do is really just as important as what you say. Let them see you write to friends, teachers and businesses. Look for opportunities for your children to be involved with writing, for example, by helping with the grocery list, sending birthday cards and invitations and taking down telephone messages. Encourage them to write for information, free samples, and enter competitions.

**Provide a place for your children to write.** A quiet corner is best with a comfortable chair and a good light. Provide pens and pencils, paper, a dictionary, and a thesaurus for older children. (We can show you the dictionaries we find useful at school.)

### **Helping Early Writers**

- Talk about books and read favourite books often.
  - Be positive and encourage your child to 'have a go'.
  - Play rhyming games like 'I spy...'
  - Write messages for your child, 'Please feed the cat.' 'Look under your bed.'
- Talk about letters, words and spaces.

- Let your child use a keyboard to play with and write messages. Show them how to type their name and later, some easy words.
- When your child asks about letters of the alphabet, call the letters by their names and introduce the sounds the letters make. Children with this knowledge are off to a flying start in their early reading.
- Make an alphabet book which builds into their very own dictionary.
- Read and sing lots of action songs and nursery rhymes.
- Provide plastic or magnetic letters.
- Help your child make a scrapbook. Glue in a picture or photo and ask your child to tell you something about the picture. Let them see you write the words and sentences. Soon they will be able to help.
- Display your child's writing on the fridge and around the house. Make sure visitors notice it!

### **Helping Children in the Middle**

- Start a family diary to record special days, funny sayings and weekend activities. Take turns to write in the diary. Glue in photos, cards and other special things. Read the diary to grandparents and visitors.
- Have fun writing messages to each other. Try writing reminders, secret messages and riddles.
- Ask your child to write a roster of jobs each person can do to help.
- Be interested in what your child is writing. Tell them what you like about it.
- Play word games like 'Scrabble', 'Upwords' and 'Boggle'. Try simple crosswords and 'Wordfinds'.
- Encourage your child to 'have-a-go' at spelling. Make sure they try the word a couple of times before you help them. Children will use you as their dictionary if you let them! Explain that you will help them look the word up in the dictionary. Encourage them to be independent.
- Ask your child to say the whole sentence out loud before they write it. This also helps with punctuation.

- When your child has finished a piece of writing, encourage them to read it aloud. Asking questions about what they have written helps children make the message clearer. Often they will be able to leave some words and ideas out as well as add some to their writing.
- Teach your child how to use the ‘Spell-Check’ on the computer.

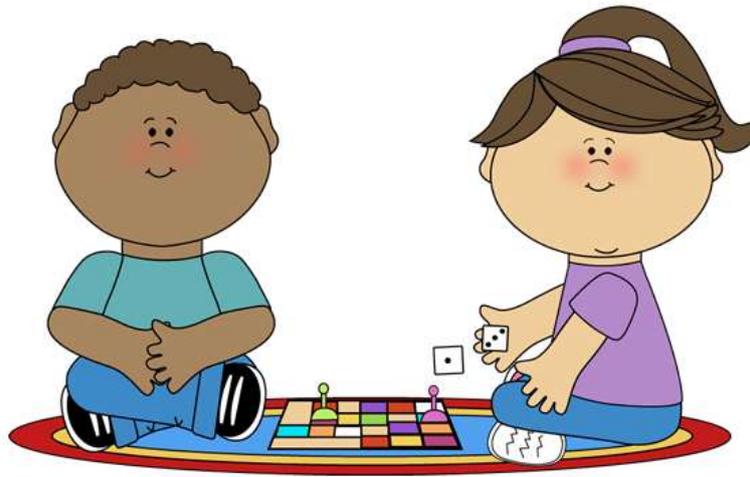
### **Helping Advanced Writers**

- Encourage your child to read the newspaper and watch the news. Talk about Current Events.
- Encourage your child to keep a diary.
- Help your child with ‘brainstorming’ – getting all their ideas down. This provides a starting point for their writing.
- Help your child find information for assignments and projects. They can write letters, ring up, go to the library, use the internet and ask people.
- Continue to provide experiences, which extend your child’s world – visit the wind farm, walk on the beach, go to a live theatre performance, visit the market.

*A copy of the Halcombe School “Essential Words” (spelling list) is enclosed. You can also find them in your Halcombe School Information Book and online. Your child’s teacher can tell you what list they working on and what help you can give to help them achieve.*



# *Helping Your Child with Maths*



## **Things to do:**

- Turn off the TV and the Playstation!
- Play board and card games.
- Bake together.
- Participate in sports and talk about all sorts of sports scores, distances, timing, team numbers.
- Teach time: clocks, days weeks, months, calendars, rate and speed.
- Estimate all the time: money, length, numbers of things, shapes, timing "Around about..."
- Handle money (the real stuff).
- Play counting games... especially when travelling.
- Use calculators.
- Look for patterns.
- Use metrics – centimetre, metre, litre, kilogram etc

## **Ask questions such as:**

- What if...?
- How many...?
- What do you think...?
- Why...?

- Is there another way to...?
- Tell me how you...?
- What have you tried...?
- What do you know about...?
- Just suppose it was...?
- How did you start...?
- What comes next...?
- How many is it to...?

Show an interest by asking open-ended questions. Instead of asking "How was school today?" try "Tell me what you did at school today". Focus on learning - instead of asking "What did you do in maths today?" try "What did you learn in maths today?"

### **Provide a positive role model**

"I don't know the answer, but lets work it out together."

Don't accept, "I'm not very good at maths". It is no more acceptable than saying "I'm not very good at reading."

### **Allow thinking time**

Let children have thinking time. If the delay is too long use a prompt like, "What numbers have you got so far?" or a ploy such as "I know you haven't got the answer yet, but if you did know how to get started, what would you do?"

### **Encourage a variety of solutions and methods**

Give praise for a child being able to verbalise several methods for solving the same problem and talk about which ways are smarter than others. Share with them the way you solve maths problems and let them share their ways with you....they are both OK!

## **Use tools of the times**

Computers, calculators, money machines and cell phones are all tools of our children's time. They need to know how to use them correctly, to use the maths they contain, and also when not to use them as well.

## **Helping Your Child with Maths when they begin School**

When children begin school, they are learning the basics of maths - counting, sorting, comparing, ordering, patterning and matching. Here are some ideas for easy everyday activities that will help your child learn about maths:

- Help your child understand the language of maths, by talking about bigger than, smaller than, next to, just after, behind, under and so on.
- Counting...young children love to count. Get them to count real things and to use counting to solve real problems.
- Count forwards and backwards.
- Play cards, board games and dominoes.
- Use the calendar. Ask, "What date will it be after the 16th?" "How many days until your birthday?" and so on.
- Help children recognise numerals around them – on letterboxes, road signs, price tags, telephone numbers.
- Make groups. Ask your child to get the right number of knives and forks, plates or birthday candles.
- Share toys and food so each person has the same amount.
- Sorting...ask your child to sort size or colour e.g. sort the knives, forks and spoons when putting them away, sort nails and screws into containers, help organise the pantry.
- Comparing...compare shoe size in the family. Whose are biggest and whose are smallest?
- Compare the number of buttons on clothes.

- Ordering...your child could order family members, oldest to youngest, smallest to biggest or lightest to heaviest, toys, books from tallest to shortest or fattest to thinnest.
- Patterning...find and look at patterns together, like those on wallpaper or curtains. Your child could copy a pattern, repeat and extend a pattern and make.
- Discuss maths in everyday situations. Talk about shape, space, patterns, time, fractions, temperature, length, area, money, weight, chance (probability). "How far do you think it is from...?" How heavy do you think....?"

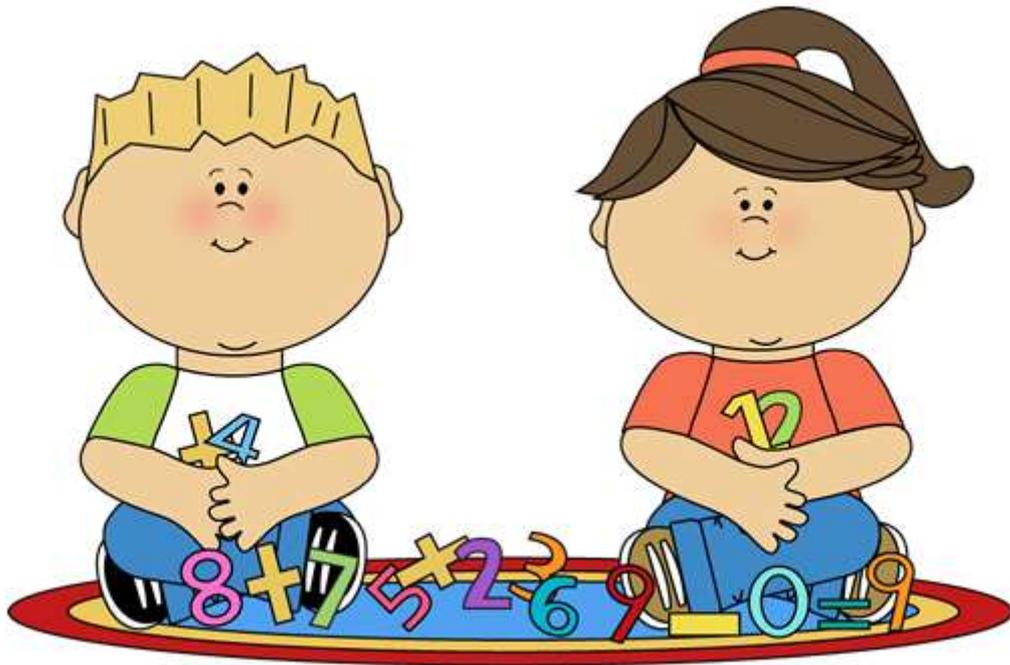
### **Learning Basic Facts (Tables)**

- Focus on what is relevant to the stage your child is working at. Make it fun. Cards and board games with 2 dice are good. You could write the facts on cards with the answers on the back, then sort into 2 piles of known and unknown facts.
- Teach the patterns and connections, for example, "If I know  $5 \times 5$ , then I must know  $5 \times 6$ , because it's just 5 more."
- Teachers are happy to share practical ideas with you about how to help your child learn their basic facts.

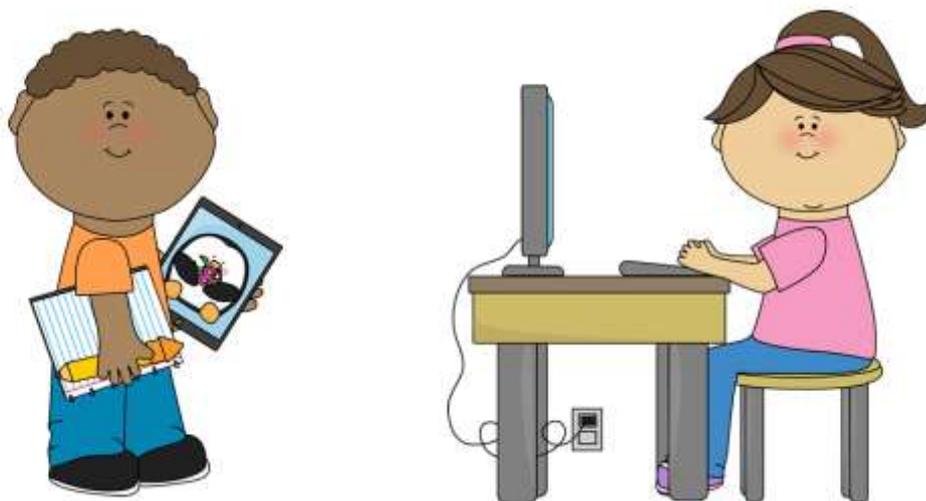
*Your child's teacher can tell you what stage your child is at, and what help you can give to help them achieve. [www.nzmaths.co.nz](http://www.nzmaths.co.nz) is a great website. Visit the class blogs to see what other websites are recommended.*

- Estimate answers frequently. Children need to see if their answer is sensible or reasonable. For example,  $28 \times 3$  is a bit less than 90.
- Practice basic facts regularly.
- Discuss maths in everyday situations. Talk about shape, space, patterns, time, fractions, temperature, length, area, money, weight, chance (probability). "How far do you think it is from...?" How heavy do you think....?"

For children to experience success in maths, they need to have both knowledge and strategies. Knowledge is the instant recall of known facts and skills. This knowledge is used to work out which strategies to use to solve maths problems. Strategies become new knowledge with enough repetition.



## *Websites that We Recommend!*



**Halcombe School website:** [www.halcombe.school.nz](http://www.halcombe.school.nz)

**Our Class Blogs** – with links to trusted educational websites that we use every day: <http://www.halcombe.school.nz/blogs2013.htm>

**Study Ladder Educational Resources:** <http://www.studyladder.co.nz/>

**ABCYa.com** – Educational Computer Games for Kids! <http://www.abcya.com/>

**Topmarks Educational Resources:** <http://www.topmarks.co.uk/>

**PBSKids:** <http://pbskids.org/>

**Vocabulary Spelling City:** <http://www.spellingcity.com/>

**Miss Maggie Scholastic Games:** <http://www.missmaggie.org/scholastic/>

**Wildmath Basic Facts Learning:** <http://www.wildmath.com/playset.htm>

**Maths Skills IXL** –the New Zealand Maths Curriculum – what we are learning at each level: <http://nz.ixl.com/math/>

**Oswego School Resources** – numeracy: <http://resources.oswego.org/games/>