

Supporting Writing

Many boys initially flounder when asked for ideas to write. It is well understood most boys need the time to think and discuss before they start to put pen to paper. If he is struggling to write at home one of the best ways to support him is to have a conversation about it first.

Other ideas include

- Encourage wide and varied reading (emphasis on fiction).
- Talk through his ideas with him before he starts to write.
- Encourage him to tackle his writing in smaller, less intimidating and more manageable chunks.
- Help him to experiment with mapping out ideas using maps, flowcharts, diagrams etc.
- Give lots of praise and encouragement and encourage him to take a rest in his writing.
- If he's short of ideas, start from what interests him and discuss it, sharing his enthusiasm.
- Try 'hot seating' a character in a story he is writing or a book he is reading (He has to pretend he is a character in the book and you ask him questions about what he is going through as the character, which he answers in role).
- Make sure he feels that he has your genuine interest.
- Reward him regularly.
- Get him to talk about personal experiences before he writes them.
- Get him to describe friends and family as starting points for developing characters.
- If he has to write a book review, talk to him about the book first and make bullet points or produce a map.

Supporting Revision and Preparing for a Test

If tests or exams are coming up try these ideas to support your son.

- Encourage him to use a wide variety of revision techniques, the best kind of revision techniques for boys are more active.
- Encourage him to make memory hooks for learning by making charts, diagrams, flow charts or whatever he prefers to help him recall information and make links between learning.
- Have a quiz (rather than a test) when practising recalling facts.
- Chat to him regularly about his progress but don't be over anxious as that can become contagious!
- Encourage him to take breaks, but ensure breaks do not take over!
- Make sure he takes some exercise. More oxygen to the brain will improve his ability to study.
- Encourage him to talk about any anxieties he may have.
- Prepare things to make revision more fun; highlighter pens, post it notes etc.
- Make sure he has a decent study environment but not too warm. It is said boys work better in lower temperatures than girls!
- Have an early night and a high energy breakfast before any test or exam.
- The night before encourage your son to picture himself in the exam or test, doing really well and smiling.
- Encourage him to believe in himself and know he will do his best.
- Build in treats for in between exams or tests and a celebration at the end.

Meadowside Parent/Carer guide to helping boys succeed



Older Boys



There can be multiple barriers as to why many boys under achieve at school. Whilst no two boys are ever the same in this guide we want to give you some practical ideas how you, as parents or carers, can support your son in fulfilling his potential.

Supporting Independence and Responsibility for his own Learning

It is known that in education there is a significant correlation between being independent and being an effective learner. Self-esteem also develops as a result of being able to do things for ourselves.

- Make sure he has a list of things he needs for school that day - don't pack his bag for him.
- Encourage him to make decisions on matters that will directly affect him.
- Encourage him to take responsibility for specific jobs around the house appropriate to his age.
- Guide him towards a good use of his pocket money, but let him make his own decisions too.
- Let him do things his own way sometimes - not always the way you want them!
- Encourage him to spend time alone without the television or computer.
- Teach him the basics of time management - "During the next few days you've got this, this and this to fit in. When are you going to be able to fit in time for this, this and this?" (You may even be able to relate it to time management in your own sphere of work).
- When asking him to keep his bedroom tidy be specific! Chunk the information. "Tidy your room" is too vague, try: "Put all your dirty clothes in the basket." "Hang up all your clean clothes in the wardrobe." "Make your bed." etc.
- Explain to him that for many adults real happiness comes from being independent, and the more independent they are, the happier they are.
- In early adolescence, explain that preparation for independent living should be the motivator. Being able to operate all household appliances should be a source of pride.
- Try using these phrases; "You decide." "If that's what you want." "So what do you think we should do?" "It's time you did this on your own now." "Did you just do that on your own? Brilliant - well done." "That's perfectly okay with me if that's what you think." "The choice is yours."

Supporting Talk

Encouraging boys to talk is very important as they naturally speak less than girls in their self-initiated play.

- Play board games together.
- Find opportunities for discussion related to films or programmes watched together on television.
- Limit leisure time spent passively in front of screens.

- Eat together as regularly as you can, creating a habit of sharing thoughts and feelings about the day as you do it.
- Wash up together.
- Talk as you do jobs around the house together (sometimes this is the best time for him to talk about concerns and problems).
- His 'payment' for a ride in mum or dad's 'taxi' can be a proper heart to heart.
- Never stop responding to his questions, or he may just stop asking them. If you ask your son questions such as 'Did you have a good day at school?' you may find you get a response as 'Yes', 'No' or 'Hrmph!'. Try to ask questions that encourage more than a one word reply. Questions such as "What was the best question you asked today?"
"What was the best/funniest/worst/strangest/most exciting thing that happened to you today?"
"What are you looking forward to doing tomorrow?"
"Was there anything you didn't understand at school?"
If his response is still limited, and you know he is deliberately blocking the answer, you can ask further questions by following two rules. You respond back with language he used and then ask him to be more specific. So the conversation might go "How was your day?"
"It was rubbish, I hate English."
"What was rubbish?"
"English."
"English isn't always rubbish, what made you hate English today?"
"No it's usually ok, but today we were just copying out stuff."
"So what is going well in English?"
"Well, the play we are doing is ok."

Supporting Reading

Reading helps boys succeed in endless ways so it is important to develop a love of reading. A lot of boys only ever see older males reading newspapers or instruction manuals and may only have seen females reading fiction. So some boys begin to think fiction is something really only for females. Boys would often do better in school if they slowed down and reflected more on their learning. Reading fiction, rather than just flicking through non-fiction fact type books, really helps this.

- Seeing older males in the house reading and talking about their reading can really help.
- Give books as presents or rewards.
- Encourage him to join web-based children book clubs, such as The Book Trust or Scholastic Book Club.
- Encourage him to explore authors' websites.
- Take an interest in what he is reading - maybe even read the same book from time to time and discuss it together.
- Find fiction that relates to his particular interests.
- Books that are TV or film 'tie-ins' can often entice reluctant readers on board.