



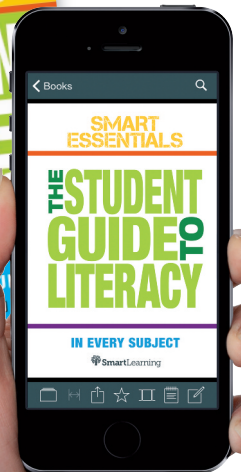
FREE

PARENTS' GUIDE TO LITERACY

TOP TIPS TO SUPPORT LITERACY AT HOME

Often we want to help our children do better at school, but we are not sure how. This is even true of (basic) reading and writing skills, which are key to success at school. As adults, we know that good English is a critical life skill and as parents we want to be able to support our children at home – but how?

At Smart Learning, we have been making resources to support busy teachers, children and parents for 16 years and have written this leaflet for parents and carers based on the handy, pocket-sized ready reference book and app-based eBook *The Student Guide to Literacy in Every Subject*. **See inside for lots of free ideas to try at home.**



SmartLearning

HELP AT HOME:

Here are some FREE hints, tips and strategies on how to improve reading and writing across all subjects. Inspired by our new book and app-based eBook 'The Student Guide to Literacy in Every Subject'.



SPELLING

Find some common words that both you and your children often misspell. Look up the words, and then carefully write down the correct spelling. Now try to work together to think up imaginative ways to remember the spelling. The Guide calls this way of learning spellings, 'memory tricks'. For example, the statement 'rhythm helps your two hips move' is a great way to remember how to spell **rhythm**. (The first letter of each word in the statement makes the word rhythm.) Similarly, some people can always spell 'because' correctly because 'big elephants can't always use small exits'.

TRY IT OUT What memory tricks can you devise to help with spelling these words? - straight, definite, chocolate, yacht. Make your own list of tricky words. Spelling memory games are a good way to pass a long journey.

WORD CLASSES

If you have the Guide, read this section, which tries to explain nouns, verbs, etc as simply as possible.

TRY IT OUT Take a set of blank cards and write a word class on each one. Try to have a few noun cards, a few verbs, and so on. Shuffle the cards and deal them. Each person then has to make a sentence out of as many of their cards as possible, converting each word class into a workable example of that class. Players can add the words the, a and an as often as they like. For example, one person might receive these seven cards: noun, adjective, connective, adverb, noun, verb, verb. From these cards, they

make this sentence: The happy (adjective) woman (noun) whistled (verb) and (connective) hummed (verb) a cheerful (adjective) song (noun).

PUNCTUATION

Awareness of punctuation in spacing and marks is vital to developing speaking and writing skills.

TRY IT OUT Play speak the mark. In this game, the whole family has to say the punctuation as they speak. For example:

Could you pass the salt [comma] please [question mark]

I have not got any homework tonight [exclamation mark]

Are you sure about that [question mark and perhaps one eyebrow raised]

Of course this cannot be played for long before it becomes tedious, but it can be fun, and it can cheer everyone up at the end of a long day. The game has another benefit: it prompts the speaker to use full and carefully thought-out sentences.

SENTENCES

The focus of this part of the book is on improving sentences in various ways so that they are more flexible, effective and interesting. The exercise on page 50 of the Guide is always fun. If you do not have the Guide, then visit www.smart-learning.co.uk/parents for the resources needed.

TRY IT OUT Take it in turns to choose one statement (clause) from the left-hand column and one from the right, and to join the two with a connective (see p26). If a bizarre sentence is created (eg He was unhappy unless the teacher

frowned) then the other person has to invent a satisfactory explanation. Invent your own statement lists and sometimes insist that the connective has to start the sentence (instead of being placed in the middle).

EXTENDED WRITING

Help your child to see the different rules that apply to different sorts of text.

TRY IT OUT Read with your child different types of text on the same subject. For example, read a description of a shark, a bit of a story featuring a shark, and a recipe for shark soup. Talk with your child about how we know one is a recipe, one a narrative (story), one a piece of information. Then cut the texts up and jumble them, then re-arrange them randomly so that the text keeps changing from one type to another. This can create some odd and even hilarious shifts of style and content.

PLANNING EXTENDED WRITING

Many children find it very hard to gather enough ideas to write about. When your child has homework which means planning or writing a lot about a topic.

TRY IT OUT If you do not have the Guide, you will need to visit www.smart-learning.co.uk/parents, a good way to help them is explained on pages 64-65. You could use this method to work with your child to gather and organise ideas. All you need is a set of small sticky notes, half an hour together, and lots of patience. Take a picture of the finished structure chart so that you both have a copy for future reference.

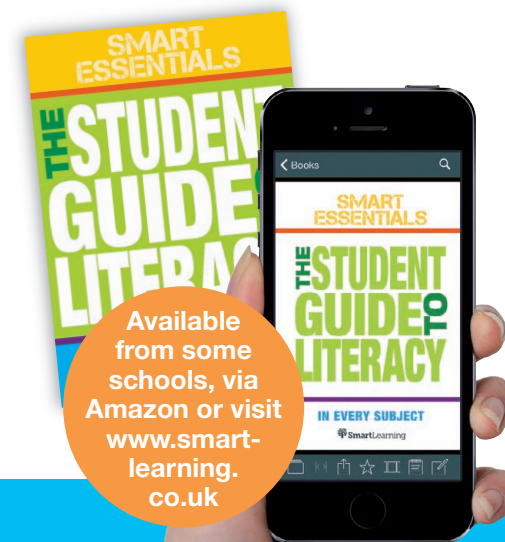
READING

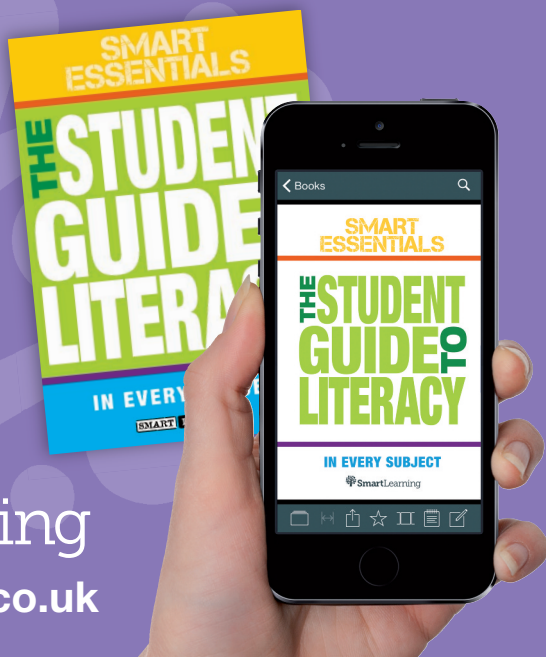
Reading is such an important skill: it allows us to find things out for ourselves, and a world of knowledge opens up to us.

TRY IT OUT The best way to help children to improve as readers is to read with them. If you do not have the guide, then visit www.smartlearning.co.uk/parents, the 'reading gym' ideas on pages 78-79 can help make your child a more able and enthusiastic reader, but they can also bring the family closer together, giving you all a shared experience and a shared set of activities.

The ideas include:

- having a brief shared reading time each day, when everyone reads their own books
- watching films together, discussing them, and then all reading the book the film was based on, perhaps reading the book in short sections aloud
- joining and using the local library together.





RESEARCH SKILLS

Supporting your child as they develop researching a subject is vital to their development as independent learners.

TRY IT OUT Watch a factual programme together on TV, by using the KWL (What I know, what I want to know, what I have learnt) on page 82 of the Guide. If you do not have the Guide, then visit, www.smart-learning.co.uk/parents. If you are about to watch a programme about an accident on a mountain, then all you have to do is to use the grid to agree on what you think you already know, and what you want to know. When you all watch the programme you then note down what you have learnt in relation to the things you wanted to know more about. It's a good way of sharpening your attention as you watch. Of course, the method can also be used very

effectively before finding things out on the internet. If you work together to apply this method to finding out from a TV programme, then your child should find it fairly easy to transfer the skill to finding out through reading - either books or computer screens.

Let us know your thoughts on these tips and if you want some tips on how to support Maths, again visit www.smart-learning.co.uk/parents for some free ideas from our NEW Maths Guide.

