

Listening to a story develops reading skills, builds vocabulary and broadens general knowledge. It also helps to support your child's writing skills and understanding of grammar and punctuation. While children will learn about how language works from speaking and listening, the type of language we use in writing is often different from that in speech, so listening to text can model different patterns of language.

When you are reading together, look at how authors use different sentence types for effect:

- Simple sentences containing one clause (for example, 'Sam picked up the spoon.').
- Short commands (for example, 'Give me the spoon, Sam!').
- Compound sentences (for example, 'Sam picked up the spoon and she ran away excitedly.').
- Sentences with a subordinate clause (for example, 'With great excitement, Sam picked up the spoon.').

Talk about different types of punctuation as well, such as question marks, exclamation marks, commas, and so on. Can your child identify ellipses? See how these are used to ramp up tension or to get the reader thinking.

2. Encourage reading

Making time to hear your child read, even when they can read independently, can be really valuable. By frequently seeing words in print, they will have the opportunity to see how the punctuation and grammar are used to share meaning.

When you read, occasionally look at the punctuation and talk about what it is telling the reader to do. For example, you could show your child how a question mark tells you to raise your voice at the end of the sentence to indicate a question being asked.

Explore how you can show the 'feeling' behind an exclamation mark. Are the characters shouting? Has something unexpected happened? Has something gone wrong?

3. Give your child opportunities to write

Writing at home can be a great way of practising writing, including using grammar and punctuation to create particular effects. Here are some ideas to encourage regular writing:

Create a story about a space adventurer with strange planetary systems to explore. Every week or month, your child could write about a new chapter about a different planet. Before long, the chapters will have built into a book they can be really proud of.

Write an A-to-Z. It could be based on anything your child is interested in – animals, space, dinosaurs, fairies, even their favourite TV programme. A page for each letter of the alphabet gives you 26 short pieces of writing spread over the year that build into one big project.

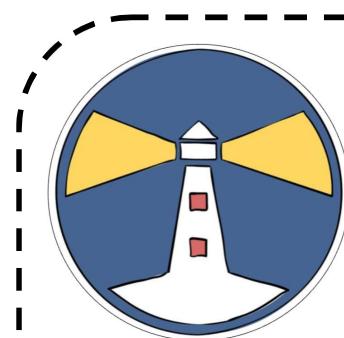
Produce a version of a book for a younger child. For example, they could write *The Rhino Who Came to Tea* or *The Very Hungry Angler Fish*. Books with a distinctive format such as *The Day the Crayons Quit* or *The Last Polar Bears* are perfect for this.

4. Help your child learn key grammatical ideas

Activity books and games can help your child get to grips with particular points of grammar and punctuation in an enjoyable way.

<https://www.topmarks.co.uk/english-games/7-11-years/spelling-and-grammar>

<https://www.topmarks.co.uk/english-games/7-11-years/punctuation>



A Guide to English in Year Three



Spelling, punctuation, and grammar – often called SPaG in schools – are crucial building blocks for children learning to speak, write, and listen. Having a good knowledge of grammar allows your child to communicate their ideas and feelings and helps them choose the right language for any situation.

Grammar & punctuation in Year 3 (age 7–8)

In Year 3, your child will use some key features of grammar and punctuation in their writing, as well as being able to use all the grammar and punctuation they learnt in Key Stage 1.

What your child will learn:

Using 'a' and 'an' correctly

The words 'a' and 'an' are called indefinite articles. If the word directly after the indefinite article starts with a consonant sound, then 'a' should be used (for example, 'a rock'). If the word directly after the indefinite article starts with a vowel sound, then 'an' should be used (for example, 'an ice-cream').

Many children will already know this by Year 3 and use these instinctively when they talk. The challenge is to remember to use the right combination in their writing. Words beginning with an unstressed 'h' can also be tricky to remember (for example, 'an hour' or 'an honest man').

Expressing time, place, and cause with conjunctions, adverbs, and prepositions

There is quite a lot packed into this statement! Thankfully, the grammar knowledge required isn't too tricky, and many children will do this automatically when they write. The main difficulty as a parent lies in knowing what the different terms mean.

'Expressing time, place and cause' means letting the reader know when something happened, where it happened, and why it happened. Your child will learn lots of ways to do this.

Conjunctions are words that link two words or phrases together, such as 'but', 'and', and 'because'. A conjunction might be used to express time (for example, 'I went to play football *after* I'd finished dinner'), or cause (for example, 'I asked him to move so I could see the sign').

Adverbs are words that describe or give more detail about a verb (for example, 'happily' or 'slowly'). An adverb might express time (for example, 'I'll tidy my bedroom *tomorrow*'), place (for example, 'The man waited *outside*'), or cause (for example, 'Josh crept *silently* across the floor').

Prepositions are words that link a noun to another word or phrase that gives more detail about it. A preposition might express time (for example, 'I went to play football *after* I'd finished dinner'), place (for example, 'Ali was *behind* Sarah in the line'), or cause (for example, 'he smiled *because of* the rainbow').

Your child will learn about these aspects of language at school, so support at home should probably focus on helping them explain what they mean as clearly as possible, without having to think about all the names of the different parts of speech.

Using paragraphs to group related ideas

Paragraphs are collections of sentences that are grouped together because they deal with a common idea or topic. There is no set length to a paragraph. In Year 3, your child will be encouraged to make use of paragraphs to make their writing easier to read.

Using headings and sub-headings

When writing non-fiction texts, your child will use headings and sub-headings to break their writing down into manageable sections for the reader. This is often taught alongside learning to use paragraphs to break writing up into sections.

Using the present perfect form of verbs

The perfect form of a verb is a way of explaining that something happened in the past, but it is either:

1. still happening now, or
2. its consequences are still being felt now.

A sentence written in the simple past tense might be 'Bella *lost* her keys'. The event happened in the past, and it is now resolved or finished. If we want to show that it is an ongoing situation or that there are further consequences from this, we might use the present perfect tense. We do this by adding 'has/have' to the simple past form of the verb: 'Bella *has lost* her keys'.

The present perfect tense is useful when something continues to be true (for example, 'I *have* lived in London for fifteen years'). The simple past tense ('I *lived* in London for fifteen years') would imply that they now live somewhere else.

Using inverted commas to punctuate speech

Your child will be taught to use inverted commas (often referred to as speech marks) when writing direct speech in stories or other writing. Either single inverted commas ('like this') or double inverted commas ("like this") can be used. The actual words that are spoken are enclosed in inverted commas:

'It's pizza for dinner,' said Dad.

At the end of a piece of speech, there should be a comma, full stop, question mark, or exclamation mark. This is placed inside the closing inverted comma or commas:

'I think we will win,' said Bill.

'What time is it now?' asked the man.

'How strange!' cried Alice.

'This path leads to the sea.'

A comma is placed before the first inverted comma if direct speech comes after the information about who is speaking:

Tom replied, 'Of course it is.'

If the direct speech is broken up by information about who is speaking, a comma (or a question mark or exclamation mark) is used to end the first piece of speech, and a full stop or comma is used before the second piece of speech:

'No,' he said. 'It's my birthday.'

'And with that,' she said, 'they were gone.'

'Stop!' he cried. 'You haven't closed the door properly!'

The focus in Year 3 is on learning to use the inverted commas, with more punctuation being taught in Year 4.

How to help at home

There are lots of ways you can help your Year 3 child with grammar and punctuation.

1. Read to your child

Although your child will probably be able to read independently now, reading aloud to your child is still very important for their education, especially with books they can't yet read on their own.