

"This Is When We Play Writing!": Writing And Play In The EYFS



"This is when we play writing!" - Reception child

I was lucky enough to sit in on a writing lesson one Monday morning in Reception at one of our *Writing for Pleasure* schools. During the lesson, a new-found friend of mine turned to me on the carpet, with a big grin on his face, and announced: "This is when we play writing!" I've never forgotten that moment.

As I sat there, I thought: you're about to engage in one of the most cognitively demanding activities you'll encounter in school - and yet, for you, it *feels* like child's play. This moment was a clear testament to the excellent teaching I was seeing. It showed how a structured, daily writing approach could seamlessly align with the joy and spontaneity of play. Instruction, structure and play no longer needed to be seen as being in opposition with each other.

The Power of Play In Early Writing Development

Play is the natural language of young children, and writing thrives within this playful culture. Children benefit from engaging in self-initiated spontaneous writing *and* from a structured writing approach like *Writing For Pleasure*. Far from being a distraction, play supports children's early writing skills children need to develop for future academic success. A daily opportunity 'to play' writing is essential for young children's overall development:

- **Social skills and self-regulation:** Collaboratively writing and book-making with your teacher(s) and friends helps children learn to navigate relationships, share, and manage their emotions.
- **Problem-solving abilities:** Through daily book-making children get to 'play on paper', experiment, test ideas, and develop their critical thinking skills.
- **Oral language:** Daily writing and book-making involves using a variety of different talk (see [this article](#) for more) which builds up children's vocabulary and communication skills.
- **Creativity:** Book-making encourages children's imaginative play on paper and nurtures their original thinking and innovations.
- **Knowledge and skills:** Daily book-making offers opportunities to explore taught concepts and practice important writing skills in an engaging and meaningful way.

Teacher Scaffolding: Enhancing Children's Writing Play

When teachers scaffold children's writing play, through their modelling and instruction, they elevate its impact, particularly in supporting children's writing skills. As Judith Schickedanz puts it: "We will not have done our best for young children if we deny them the path to learning they seek through play. But, we also will not have done our best if we fail to provide instruction." As *Writing For Pleasure* teachers in the EYFS can testify, play and writing instruction coexist seamlessly, creating a rich, supportive community of writers where children *and* adults:

- Write during structured book-making time and while playing in the writing centre (and other areas of provision).
- Engage with cross-curricular writing activities that integrate writing and book-making with science, PSHE lessons, and other subjects.
- Build writing skills through meaningful book-making projects that connect to children's interests and prior knowledge.

A daily opportunity to 'play at writing' is not a luxury - it is a vital component of early childhood education. This practice supports children's holistic development while offering an engaging and effective way to nurture their early reading *and* writing skills. Through thoughtful instruction and scaffolding, teachers can cultivate a community of writers that balances the joy of play with the academic rigor essential for lifelong writing success. By keeping writing - and being a young writer - playful, teachers help children develop the skills, confidence, and curiosity they need to thrive.

For more, download our publications: *Getting Children Up & Running As Writers In EYFS & KS1* [[LINK](#)] or our EYFS writing plans [[LINK](#)]. Our publications and unit plans are free for our members. To become a member, click [here](#).