



# Writing in role

Encourage children to pick up their pens with these activities from **Linda Mort...**



**A** gap between boys' and girls' levels of enjoyment and achievement in writing has been revealed by the first statistics from the Early Years Foundation Stage. In its online guidance, *Gateway to Writing*, the previous government recommended that a key strategy to encourage young boys to write is through role-play, tailored to their interests and which maximises their love of active, adventurous play, especially outside. Here are some ideas which will appeal not only to boys but to girls too...

## 1 Provide inspiration

Organise visits from 'people who help us' and ask them to talk about how they write at work – perhaps involving themselves in a little role-play with your children – and use books. Also, use appropriate video resources which show exactly how, where, when and why grown-ups use writing as part of their work.

## 2 Write that message down!

Talk about how a very important part of the work 'people who help us' do is writing down important phone messages about people who need help. Say that the person who 'takes the call' must listen carefully to the message, write it down straightaway so they don't forget it, and then either tell the person who will 'solve the

problem' (if they are in the same building, such as a doctor who may need to visit a patient) or phone them. It could be, for example, a builder who may need to come and rebuild, say, a garden wall that has blown down. Say also that emergency services phone operators can send details of the messages, for example to the police, firefighters or ambulance crews, by computer. The messages will then be printed out.

## 3 Phone message circle

This game may be played at 'circle time'. Ask a child to be the 'phone operator' and to sit on a chair in the centre of the circle, next to a small table. Put a toy phone on the table, plus a clipboard, paper and pencil. On a tray on the floor next to the chair, display up to

three 'people who help us' props – for example a police helmet, a stethoscope, plastic builder's trowel, plumber's wrench, car rescuer's/vet's jacket etc.

Ask children to sit on chairs in a circle around the 'operator', then ask the 'operator' to hold up a prop and announce who they are – for example, a firefighter. Pass another toy phone around the circle as you play music, or as children sing the song below. When the music or song stops, the child holding the phone must look and see what kind of 'person who helps us' is sitting on the chair, and 'phone' them, with an emergency message – for example: 'Hello, please send a plumber quickly! Water is spurting up from my kitchen

(Sung to the tune of Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star)

The phone is ringing,  
What must we do?  
Get our pad and a pen, too!  
Then we listen to what they say,  
And write down the message straightaway!  
Now we'll remember very well,  
And we'll know just who to tell!



## Make your mark

THREE RESOURCES TO HELP YOU ENCOURAGE YOUNG WRITERS...

Gateway to Writing –

<http://nationalstrategies.standardscsf.gov.uk/node254237>

Our helpers series, Evans Books –

[www.evansbooks.co.uk](http://www.evansbooks.co.uk)

People who help us DVDs, Child's Eye Media –

[www.childsyemedia.com](http://www.childsyemedia.com)

sink!' or 'I've just seen a shed on fire!'

The 'operator' must 'jot the message down', then make another quick call to the person or team who will get the problem solved.

## 4 Looking for Goldilocks

Brainstorm ideas about how the police would need to write things down in their 'police search' for Goldilocks – an ideal scenario for an outdoor rescue adventure! Goldilocks' mum or dad could make a 999 call to report Goldilocks missing. (Emphasise that children must never call the police themselves.) A police officer would visit Goldilocks' house and write a report, with a description of Goldilocks, and where she was last seen etc. The officer could then call other officers in their patrol cars or 'on the beat', who would then write down what Goldilocks looked like in their notebooks. Meanwhile, Mummy Bear or Daddy Bear, having just found Goldilocks asleep in Baby Bear's bed, could call the police to report an unknown girl having turned up at their house. The police headquarters could then call the nearest officer to the forest where the Three Bears live, to collect Goldilocks and take her back home. The chief detective would then write a report about the investigation in the police logbook, and Goldilocks and her parents could write 'thank you' letters to the Three Bears and to the police.

## 5 Search and rescue

Look on the internet for the websites



of emergency services and organisations for stories of real-life rescues which will inspire your children's role-play. Talk about 'search and rescue operations', which often involve helicopters looking for people who may be lost, up mountains, in rivers, canals, or in the sea. The police, mountain rescue teams, coastguard service and air ambulances, all make use of helicopters. Helicopter rescue crews often write their important information on special write-on-the-pocket trousers on their flight suits.

Children could devise their own 'missions' outside, using 'play people' or miniature bears. A bear could, for example, 'fall out of a boat' (in your outside water tray or canal system), and have to be 'winched up' by a small world helicopter. Use the emergent writing messages and notes children write during their rescue play to help the children dictate rescue stories, which could be scribed in a Big Book of Rescues, illustrated by the children.

## 6 Just in time

A 'car rescuers' theme provides lots of scope for writing down 'car rescue card membership numbers', registration numbers

and mobile phone numbers, as well as details of the location of the broken-down vehicles, etc. Once the vehicle has been transported on a breakdown truck to the car repair shop, there will also be the need for writing a 'repair report', bill (invoice) and receipt. Perhaps children might like to explore in role-play what happens when a member of staff breaks down on their way to nursery/school and has to call the car rescue service. Will they get to school in time?

## findoutmore

Linda Mort is educational director of Child's Eye Media, producers of the Young Writers' Role Play Pack (films featuring adults writing as part of their work and children's role-play), related children's writing through role-play sheets, teaching ideas and outfits.