

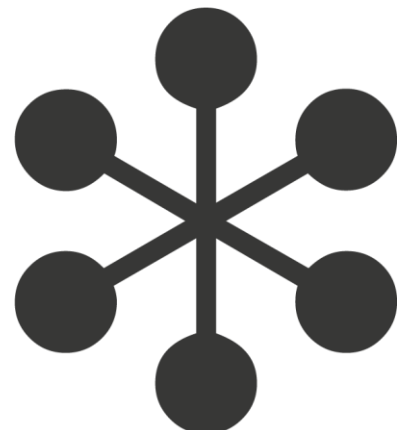
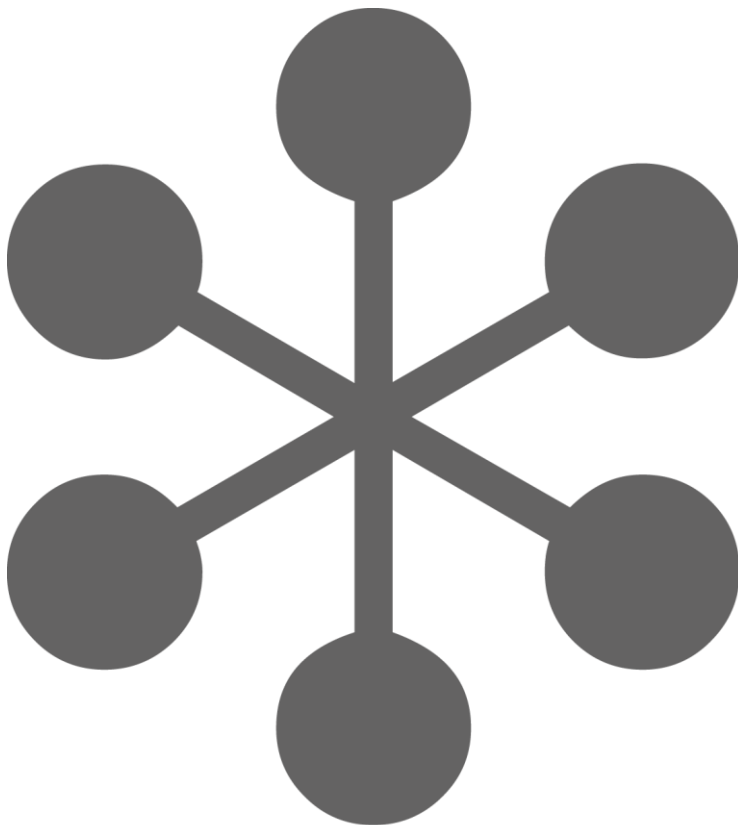


**CAMBRIDGE ENGLISH**  
Language Assessment  
Part of the University of Cambridge

# Cambridge English

## Engaging parents in their children's English language learning

5Y09



## Handout: Engaging parent's help in their child's English language learning

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Here are some suggestions for how a teacher might engage a parent's help in their child's English language learning.

1. Organise a meeting with parents to outline the differences in teacher/parent roles which will help a parent to understand their unique and vital role in the language learning process.

Teacher	Parent
May have a class of, e.g. 20 students	One child
May have no choice regarding the selection of teaching material	Can choose or make their own teaching material
Hopes the material will engage most children	Can choose material that will definitely engage their own child
Material is the same for everyone	Can focus on the child's interests
Limited and specific lesson times	Time allowance is more flexible
A specific approach may be determined by the school/exam preparation	No defined ruling regarding their approach so can be personalised
Knows the child 'somewhat'	Knows the child intimately
No motivational rewards other than praise	More varied rewards are possible

2. Organise an information session with parents to explain more about the *Cambridge English: Young Learners* tasks (if their students are preparing for this).
3. Show parents how to find out information online about *Cambridge English: Young Learners* and the wordlists, grammatical structures and Can Do statements, so they have a better understanding of the resources available.
4. Explain the *Cambridge English: Young Learners* ethos to parents, by telling them how any language 'work' the child does at home that is fun, varied, interesting and creative will not only help the child prepare for the tests but also develop their child's English language skills in a natural, stress-free way.
5. Explain to parents that mistakes bring opportunities for learning. Children have an extraordinary ability to learn language through listening to or reading stories and many young children remember language more easily if learning is subtly combined with creative activities such as drawing, role play, model making, etc.

# Activities for parents and children to enjoy at home

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Please remember to always keep activities and games fun, success-oriented and short (depending upon age: 3–10 minutes). If your child is having fun working on their own, then allow them (within reason) to moderate their own activity times.

## Non-test-specific activities

For children working on their own:

- Give your child books/graded readers/comics/e-books that are appropriate to their level and reflective of their interests.
- Allow your child to look at books that are above their level, but that have interesting themes and engaging pictures, for example, *How Machines Work*, *The history of Fashion*, *Inventors and Inventions*, etc. They will absorb language without realising it.
- Let your child listen to audio books.

For parents with limited time or level of English (monitoring only):

## Writing

- Encourage your child to write to/email English-speaking pen friends, English-speaking grandparents or an imaginary English-speaking friend!
- Ask your child to create a 'favourite word' file or collection of flash cards and keep them in a special 'word box'.

## Writing and drawing/photos

- Ask your child to draw a picture of their choice and label 10 things they have put in it. (Encourage them to use dictionaries, if necessary.)
- Ask your child to design a robot or draw a pet or favourite wild animal, etc., and label body parts, list what it can/can't do, and so on.
- Get your child to design their 'dream room/home' and label colours and furniture, etc.
- Ask your child to draw a known or invented friend and create a fact file, naming the friend and saying what their favourite colour/hobby is, how old their friend is, where they live, if their friend has brothers and sisters, etc.
- Help your child to find a photograph of their favourite hockey/football/basketball team or film/pop star and create a fact file about them.

- Get your child to create and illustrate a one-week 'dream menu', 'dream timetable of activities' or 'weather diary'.
- Ask your child to cut pictures out of magazines and create a collage or poster on the theme of a special interest (fashion, skateboarding, aliens, funny buildings, different jobs, etc.) and label it or write captions.

### **Reading/interacting**

Encourage your child to interact with language-learning websites such as:

- [www.cambridgeenglish.org/learning-english/parents-and-children](http://www.cambridgeenglish.org/learning-english/parents-and-children)
- [www.hooplakidz.com/](http://www.hooplakidz.com/)
- <http://learnenglishkids.britishcouncil.org/en/>

For videos and songs: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HLx1R39kc38>

For parents who have more time/wider knowledge of English (monitoring and interacting):

### **Listening and speaking**

- Read your child stories, pausing to ask what is happening, what just happened, what might happen next, etc. (depending on your child's level).
- Create a collection of laminated photographs of different people. These should vary in age, clothes and physical features. Put the laminates on the floor/a table. Choose one photograph without saying who it is and describe it. Your child must guess which one it is. Reverse roles.
- Create flash cards of nouns or verbs from a coursebook or *Cambridge English: Young Learners* wordlists. Your child must illustrate them and decide where to place them in the home (on the wall, by the TV, under a chair, etc.). Ask: *Where's the 'robot'?* and let your child answer. Accept wrong answers. The importance here is your child's engagement.
- Let your child choose three new English words a day to teach you. They could create a file of 'Mum and Dad's English words' and test you at the end of each week.
- Organise a fun 'English Minute' during meal times, on car journeys, etc., when you and your child are only allowed to speak in English.
- Play board games in English such as bilingual *Scrabble* or *Monopoly*
- Play card games in English such as Happy Families, Snap and Pelmanism (matching games, e.g. 'two' and '2').

- Watch cartoons or films with the volume turned off and take turns at guessing what people are saying or thinking.
- Show your child a picture you know they'll like and ask them to tell you something about the picture that only they know (they will need to invent these details), e.g. what someone's name is, what's going to happen next, what's behind a tree – creative thinking! Play devil's advocate, for example, say: *Well I think she's 102!* (to which your child may answer: *No she isn't. She's only 6!*)
- In your living room or kitchen, move three or four things (that are usually in the same place) to another part of the room. Ask: *Which things are in different places?* And then *Where were they? Where are they now?* (good for revising home words and prepositions).
- Ask in English about your child's English/Music/Sports lesson. Your child should respond in English.
- Play 'long sentence'. You say: *I can see a TV.* Your child says: *I can see a TV and some flowers.* You say: *I can see a TV, some flowers and my cup of coffee.* Continue until you or your child makes a (memory) mistake.
- Ask your child to help you write a food shopping list. Perhaps they could choose one extra thing to put on the list that they would most like to eat.
- Ask about your child's favourite computer game (e.g. Minecraft). They must tell you, in English, all about their latest engagement with the game. You could also do this with a favourite TV programme.
- Play word bingo with your child and other members of the family.
- Play guessing games such as *I Spy*, *Hunt the Thimble*, *What am I?* and *Animal, Vegetable or Mineral?* in English. If you don't know these games, you can find out how to play them online.
- Collect a set of small objects, for example, ruler, pencil, rubber, pen, crayon, apple, toy car, shell (depending upon level). Put three or four of the known objects in a bag. Your child must guess what's in the bag today. They should ask questions such as: *Is my shell in the bag today?*
- Ask your child to pretend to be another family member or family friend. Ask questions to find out who they are, for example: (*Cambridge English: Starters*), *Have you got brown hair?*; (*Cambridge English: Movers*) *Are you older than me?*; (*Cambridge English: Flyers*) *Do you often come to visit us?* Then reverse roles.
- Buy your child a puppet (or robot, monster, alien toy, etc.) and say that this toy only understands English. Model a conversation with the toy yourself to encourage the child to do the same in private.

- Ask your child about colours or the numbers of things they see on car journeys, etc. *That car's red! I can see three buses!* Accept mistakes. The important thing is for your child to engage with the task.
- Create or cut out cartoon faces and display them in a poster in your kitchen or dining room. Each face should show a different expression, e.g. angry, tired, happy, sad, worried. These words could be added to the poster images. Ask: *How are you today?* Family members must then take turns to ask and answer the question referring to the adjectives on the poster.
- Find an interesting picture and let your child look at it for 30 seconds. Remove the picture and ask questions (use present tenses), such as: *What colour is the flower? What is the boy wearing?* Your child then chooses a picture for you to memorise.

### **Writing/puzzles**

- Ask your child to take the title of a favourite story and makes as many shorter words as they can from all the letters. You could set an easy target to beat to keep this success-oriented.
- Ask your child to create word-search puzzles on a theme, e.g. animals, for you to try to solve. This could be made more fun if your child times you and gives you a mark for your efforts.
- Play a memory game. Put 20 known items on a tray (ruler, rubber, pencil, toy car, etc., depending on your child's age and ability). Let your child see it for 30 seconds then remove it. Your child must try to write a list of everything they saw. Make this easy, not difficult.
- With your child, choose a list of animal words, modes of transport words, food words, sports words, etc. They must then list them in specific orders (biggest>smallest, fastest>slowest, nicest>nastiest, easiest>most difficult, etc.).
- Write a list of words your child knows but make mistakes in your spellings. Your child must become the teacher and correct your spellings.
- You and your child could collect English words electronically, making use of devices such as tablets, etc.

### **Writing and drawing**

- Ask your child to draw a picture/cut out a picture from a magazine/copy and paste a cartoon picture from the internet into a Word file. They must then write a 20–30-word story about it. They could create their own collection of short picture stories.

- Give your child a magic word box (shoe box?) into which they put flash cards of new vocabulary they've learned (and illustrated, perhaps with their own drawings or downloaded cartoon images). They are likely to enjoy collecting those. These could also be used to create table-top sentences.

### **Reading/puzzles**

- Find a funny text or short story, cut it up and ask your child to use sticky tape to stick it back together again, then read the story aloud together.
- Create a set of letters on flash cards and put these in a bag. Take turns to pull a letter out and then try to think of a word (on a theme or any word) that begins with that letter, for example: *A>apple!* If your child can think of more than one word per letter, that is great!
- Ask your child to collect verb phrases on cards which you have made together, for example: *really likes eating*, *hates doing*, and create funny sentences by adding different subject and object cards, for example, *This frog really likes eating chips! My dad really likes eating T-shirts!* You can then include adjective flash cards, e.g. *This silly frog really likes eating fat chips!* You could extend this by scrambling phrase or single word cards for the child to re-order to create their own choice of sentence/s.

### **Test-specific activities**

- If your child is anxious about English class-work, take quiet time with them at home to go over material in coursebooks that they don't understand.
- Find simple cartoon strips and ask your child to create a story from these and tell it or write it.
- Ask your child to create their own cartoon strips and tell or write the story.
- Download Reading and Writing, Listening or Speaking *Cambridge English: Young Learners* sample practice tests from the Cambridge English website. Your child should be able to work their way through these with encouragement and careful guidance. You'll find that many of the activities above duplicate the test tasks in some way.
- Download teacher support materials, apps and games from the Cambridge English website.
- Children can learn at home with books such as *Fun for Starters*, *Movers* and *Flyers* or *Storyfun* with your guidance. The Teacher's books are full of easy-to-follow instructions.

## Notes

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A large rectangular box for taking notes. Along the top edge of the box, there are 15 small, empty circles, evenly spaced, which likely represent a binder ring or a decorative element. The rest of the box is empty, providing space for writing.