

## Writing

Writing is a key skill for everyone, including those with Rett Syndrome, to develop.

Once you can write, you can say anything you like and will not be restricted by the words on your AAC system.

Whilst most people can pick up a pen and write, others need to use an '**alternative pencil**'. ie; a pencil that is not the traditional kind. This might be:

- a standard keyboard
- letters printed on a page
- a flip book
- an eye gaze key board

When learning to write, we go through the initial phase of '**mark making**'. This is more commonly known as '**scribbling**' and is something that all children do.

Those with Rett Syndrome need to have the same opportunity to mark make as it is a vital stage in learning to write.

The following steps will help support mark making and develop writing skills.

First, establish a purpose.

Examples are:

- shopping list
- letter to someone
- writing about something they did that day
- writing about a person
- Role play: doctors notes, flight tickets, school register

Then let them select letters using the alternative pencil.

One type of alternative pencil is an ABC book. It offers a way to select letters to write using the eyes rather than needing to physically hold a pencil.

### How to write using an ABC book

1. Go through the letters on the page.  
Say: **"There is an a, b, c, d, would you like one of these letters, yes or no?"** Whilst saying this point to each letter and then to the yes and no symbols as you say them.
2. The person may either use their natural yes (e.g. a look/a blink etc.) or look at the yes symbol. Take anything else as a no.  
When they have made their choice, point to the symbol to reinforce it. E.g. **'you are looking away, are you're saying no you don't want any of these letters?' <whilst pointing to the no symbol>**
3. If they do choose no, turn the page.



4. Go through the letters on the next page. **"Would you like an e, f, g, h?"**  
**<they look to the yes/use their natural yes> "I see you're looking at the yes symbol/I see you're looking at me and telling me yes/ I wonder which letter you would like to write."**
5. Go through each of the letters on that page to ask which one they would like to write.
6. Refer back to the purpose e.g. **"I wonder which letter you need for our shopping list. Is it the 'e'?"**  
**<they look away> "No not the 'e'. Is it the 'f'?" <they look at you> "You're looking at me and telling me yes it's the 'f'".**

Written by Callie Ward & Abigail Davison-Hoult on behalf of Rett UK

7. Ask them if they would like to help you to write it on the paper.  
If they say yes, you can offer support to do this, If they say no, write down their chosen letter on the paper. Offer compliments on their writing.
8. Ask them if they would like to write another letter.  
If they say 'yes' ask if it is another letter in this word or if they would like to start a new word.
9. Always go back to the **BEGINNING** of the alphabet for them to choose the next letter.

### Tips for using an ABC book for writing

Sit on the side of the 'yes' symbol so that it is not confusing if they also have a look for yes.

If you are not quite sure whether it was a yes or not, always blame yourself rather than them **"I'm so sorry that was my fault, I missed your look. Would you tell me again if you wanted one of these letters."**

If they are really struggling, suggest they help you to have a go. This takes the pressure off them, and reduces the apraxia which in turn means their body will be more likely to be able to give it a go.

There is a big emphasis in the U.K. national curriculum on phonics to support reading, therefore try to say the letter sounds as well as their names.

You can begin to use their writing as learning opportunities, for example, **"I love your letter 'f', I'm going to borrow it to write my word"**.

You could then model writing the letter 'u' and then 'n' using their flip book and sound out the word you've written. **F-u-n!**

Give the word context by putting it in a sentence **"Writing with you is fun!"**