

Some things you can do

Create a visual timetable- Visual timetables or schedules are a great tool for allowing children (with or without special educational needs) to see what is going to happen throughout the day. This can help to provide structure and routine, encourage independence, prevent anxiety and allow for rewards. Creating a visual timetable involves using a series of pictures or photographs to show your child what will happen at different times of the day eg. 8am breakfast, 8:30am brush teeth, 9am get dressed etc. You may add specific times and/or text, or you can use 'first, next and then'. Timetables can be as detailed or simplistic as you like. It is not necessary to spend a lot of time or money creating a timetable. You can find examples of timetables on Pinterest, print and customise visual timetables from [Twinkl.ie](https://www.twinkl.ie) or simply draw your own! Involve your child in creating the schedule and include something fun each day to encourage your child to complete the 'not so fun' activities. See an example of a visual timetable here <https://www.twinkl.ie/resources/specialeducationalneeds-sen/sen-and-pshe/visual-timetables>

Daily reading - The benefits of reading with your child are endless. Reading provides opportunities for language skills acquisition, critical thinking, imaginative and emotional development and allows for bonding between parents and children. Ask your child questions about their book (see sample questions and comprehension strategies) and try to choose books that are suited to your child's reading ability. A quick way of doing this is to follow the 'Five finger rule' - Hold up five fingers while the child begins reading. Put down one finger for each word the child does not know on the page. If all five fingers are down by the time the child reaches the end of the page, the book is too difficult. Read books your child already has or check out some of the following websites for some extra reading

<https://home.oxfordowl.co.uk/books/free-ebooks/>

<https://www.speld-sa.org.au/services/phonic-books.html>

<https://www.starfall.com/h/>

Spelling

If you would like to revise some of the spellings your child has been learning in class, Spell Well spelling book can be found online and accessed for free on <https://www.cjfallon.ie/>. Use magnetic letters to help children make words, write words on a whiteboard or have them write the word in flour or sand. Write the words in a rainbow of colours, make your own flash cards (visit [twinkl.ie](https://www.twinkl.ie) for resources), use the 'look, say, cover, write, check' method to reinforce learning or play some fun spelling games. You can find more ideas on <https://www.education.com/games/spelling/>

If your child has been working on the SNIP spelling programme this can be accessed on http://www.snip-newsletter.co.uk/pdfs/downloads/literacy_programme_1.pdf

For an individualised spelling programme with free access for the remainder of the school year checkout <https://spellingsforme.ie/>

There are also lots of fun apps available for reading and spelling such as 'Hairy Letters', 'Phonics Studio' and 'Sight Words'.

Language skills

If your child has difficulties understanding or using language the following activities can be useful:

- Games - Simon Says, Twister, Guess Who, Headbanz
- Sequencing - The child could put the events of a story in order using 'first, next, then finally' or 'beginning, middle, end'. This can be done verbally, using printed pictures from the story, drawing pictures and/or adding text. The child can sequence events or write lists of instructions eg. How to make a cake. You can find sequencing activities on <https://www.dltk-kids.com/type/sequencing.htm>
- Mind mapping and word webs - These are useful for organising thoughts and information without the need for lots of writing. Find some examples on <https://www.twinkl.ie/search?term=concept+map+template>
- Colourful semantics - An excellent tool for grammar development which breaks up parts of a sentence and colour codes them. 'Who' words are orange, 'what doing' is yellow, 'what' is green and 'where' is blue eg. **The boy is playing football in the garden.** This encourages correct word order, vocabulary expansion, correct use of nouns, verbs, prepositions and adjectives and can be used for lots of follow-up activities such as story writing. <https://www.twinkl.ie/resource/who-doing-what-what-with-whom-colourful-semantics-cut-up-sentences-activity-t-s-2547298>
- Reading comprehension - This is the ability to understand and take meaning from text being read. There are lots of strategies that can be used to develop reading comprehension. Find out more from [readingrockets.org https://www.readingrockets.org/helping/target/comprehension](https://www.readingrockets.org/helping/target/comprehension)

Remember - Above all else, reading with and talking to children is instrumental to their learning. Praise and encouragement are also great motivators. Keep active, keep talking and keep safe!

Some useful websites

www.speechandlanguagekids.com

<https://www.dyslexia.ie/>

<https://downsyndrome.ie/>

<https://autism.ie/>