

‘Stick to the plan, trust the process’

Sue White, Homeschooling parent, Sydney, Australia, March 2025

When my son was seven years old, I made the decision to homeschool him. By that point, I had been deeply concerned about his literacy for over a year. Despite my best efforts, he was struggling significantly with reading, and I was searching for the right way to support him.

Initially, I tried outsourcing the problem. We enrolled him in a formal tutoring program three mornings a week. I wasn't actively involved in the process, and I had little insight into what approach they were using. Despite their efforts, my son didn't engage, and his progress was minimal. That's when I was introduced to Sounds-Write and everything changed.

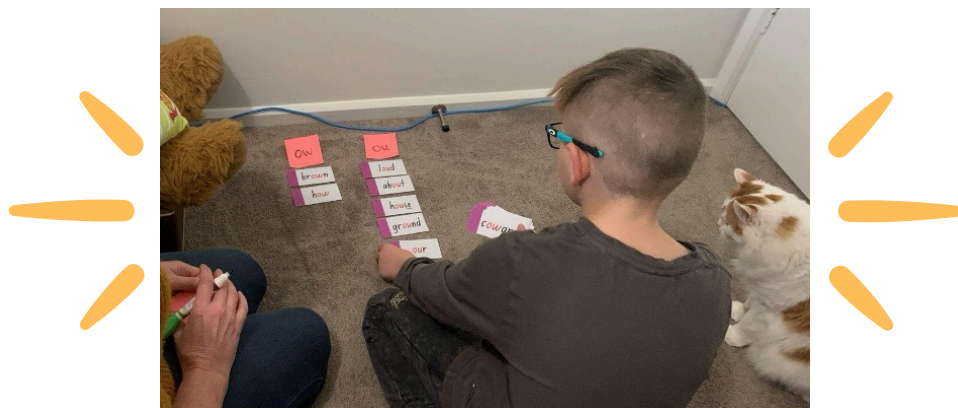
Discovering Sounds-Write and building a routine

I started by watching a free one-hour training session online, which provided an overview of the Sounds-Write method. I was immediately drawn to the fact that this was an evidence-based approach, especially given my strong suspicion that my son had dyslexia. When he eventually had formal testing, that was confirmed—**his reading ability was in the first percentile**. Other aspects of his diagnoses (ADHD, autism and anxiety) also contributed to what was a complicated picture.

I decided that literacy would be our top priority in terms of homeschool. As far as I was concerned, everything else in his education depended on his ability to read. I had assumed I could simply find experts and outsource the process of teaching my son to read. However, I quickly learned that, while expertise was critical, my involvement as a parent was just as important. With Sounds-Write, I wasn't just a passive observer; I needed to understand how my son was learning so I could support him every day at home.

Our weekly sessions with our tutor Jacinda were structured, multisensory, and systematic. At home we started small—just five minutes of practice a day—but we did it diligently. Over time, we built up to ten, then 20- and 30-minute sessions at home almost every day. I committed to ensuring that, no matter what else happened in our day, literacy practice remained our priority.

It wasn't always easy. Learning to read was incredibly hard for my son, but once we started with the Sounds-Write method, we saw steady progress. Persistence definitely paid off. The structure of the method, with its clear, step-by-step progression, meant that he was continuously moving forward.



Breakthrough moments

When my son read his first decodable book from start to finish in one sitting, it was a massive achievement. We jumped up and down, hugged, and I cried. It was a clear sign that all our efforts were working. Other breakthroughs followed. One day, I noticed him reading a book on his own—something I had left around the house. It was a moment I'll never forget. I still tear up thinking about it! Another major turning point came during a holiday. Six months earlier, I had to read every restaurant menu to him. This time, when I started to do that he said "Mum, I can read it," grabbing the menu, reading it and choosing for himself. He was so confident, I was floored. It showed me just how much his world had expanded thanks to being able to read.

One of the most valuable aspects of the Sounds-Write method is that it doesn't just teach reading—it integrates spelling and writing as well. Initially, my focus was solely on helping him read, but I soon realised that literacy encompasses all three skills.

At one stage, his reading progress had surged ahead, while his writing lagged behind. Our tutor helped us shift focus temporarily, pausing our 'reading' work to ensure his spelling and writing caught up. This was a tough adjustment—just as he was enjoying his newfound reading ability, we had to introduce another challenge. But because he had built such a strong foundation, he adapted and improved more quickly than I had expected.



Today, at ten and a half years old, **my son's reading is really strong**. His spelling is excellent—maybe even better than many kids of his age. And the impact on his confidence has been profound. He now sees himself as capable. The sense of achievement he feels when reading independently has been transformative—not just academically, but in his overall self-esteem and approach to learning.

The role of the homeschooling parent

Homeschooling a child with dyslexia has reinforced the importance of using a structured, evidence-based approach to literacy. Simply surrounding a child with books and reading to him wasn't enough. I had been doing that since he was a baby, I was a journalist, my mother was a teacher. He could not have been born into a more literacy-rich environment. My son STILL needed explicit, systematic instruction to learn how to read.

One of the most effective strategies I used was ensuring that decodable books were always available. I also continued reading to him every night, maintaining a balance between structured literacy lessons and the simple enjoyment of stories.

Having the right method, a committed tutor and the right resources, and our unwavering consistency made all the difference. Sounds-Write provided the clear roadmap, eliminated guesswork and gave us a structured, effective way forward.

For homeschooling parents, my biggest takeaway is to stick to the plan, trust the process, and keep going. It's not about quick wins, but about steady, persistent effort. Literacy is the foundation of education, and finding the right method to teach it has changed my son's life—and mine—forever.