

# SUPPORTING YOUR CHILD WITH THEIR READING



## HELPING YOUR CHILD TO LEARN-READING

Even though schools teach children how to read, parents still have an important role to play. Research shows that parents who get involved in their child's education make a big difference to how well their children do. Parents can help their child with reading by showing how important it is and by finding ways to help their children enjoy reading.

Studies show that children who enjoy reading and practice the skill regularly, do much better at school.



### **Instant ideas for improving a child's reading at any age:**

- Spend 10 minutes a day reading together. Make it fun – choose books you both enjoy. Talk about the pictures and characters and make up your own stories.
- Ask your child's teacher for advice and ideas about how you can help with reading.
- Buy books as presents.
- Make a special place to keep reading books from school, books borrowed from the library and books bought as presents. It will show how important reading is to you.
- Look at brochures and catalogues together.
- Look at newspapers together and point out more unusual words.
- Make a word box and put in new words your child has learnt.



## Learning to Read

There are lots of simple things you can do to help your child get the best start to their education and to support what they are learning at nursery or in reception.



### **Instant ideas:**

- Get your child to spot letters they recognise (such as the first letter of their name) in words.
- Encourage your child to read the words on food packets when you are unpacking shopping or cooking.
- Spend 10 minutes a day reading a book together or talking about the pictures and making up your own story. Books are a great way to pass time on the bus or while you are waiting to see the doctor.
- Reading in any language helps children with their literacy.
- Sing nursery rhymes and songs together.
- Put books in your child's toy box.



## ? What should I know?

Children often learn stories off by heart so that they seem to 'read' a book. This is normal and means your child is well on the way to becoming a reader. It shows they understand the connection between the words in print and the story. If you or your partner are not confident readers you can still help your child by talking about the pictures and making up a story to go with them. Children will often want to read the same book over and over again. This shows that they are enjoying the book and getting real pleasure from reading.



## Learning at Home

Learning at home can be fun and will make a real difference to how well your child will do at school.

Here are some suggestions to support learning at home:

- Spend 10 minutes reading together. Get your child to retell a favourite picture book in their own words.
- Get your children to make up plays. When a friend comes round they could put on a show for you.
- They could write the scenes themselves or use books to help them with ideas.
- Let your child choose books that they want to read. It is free to join the library and books can be borrowed for free as well. Librarians can help find books about hobbies, interests, sports or TV programmes.
- Buy books as presents as well as toys, and encourage friends and relatives to do the same.
- Get your child to work out which bus to take by reading the place names on the front.
- Use pop-up or lift-the-flap books to get even reluctant readers interested.



## ? What should I know?

Praise is really important in encouraging a child to read. Children need lots of practice and encouragement. If they are struggling, remind them of other things they are good at, or things they love but had to practice to get good at (for example cycling or swimming). A word you will hear from school when children are learning to read is 'phonics'. This means the letter and letter combination sounds rather than the letter names. All children learn differently. Some children need to slow down when they read, as they may be good at spotting the first letter of words and then guessing what the word says. Others need to worry less about mistakes and read all the way through the story. If your child gets stuck, encourage them to sound out the word and use clues in the story to help them guess what the word is. Pictures can help give clues to words as well. Part of learning to be a better reader is being able to guess what new words mean and how they sound.



# Moving on to different stages of reading

Once your child has learnt to read, there are lots of things you can do to help them become confident independent readers who read books, magazines, comics and newspapers for pleasure.

## Instant ideas:

- Hear your child read. Remember that a good 10 minutes is better than a difficult half hour.
- Find books about things you know your child likes – for example, dinosaurs, space or maybe TV tie-ins.
- Take books with you when you go on a journey or shopping trip to help pass the time.
- Read a match report for your team together.
- Stick a map of the world on the wall and stick pins in the map to show where books you or your child have read are set or are about. You can do the same with magazine and newspaper articles.



## Try making time to:

- Share articles or stories in comics, magazines or newspapers you or your child have enjoyed.
- Share the internet together. All libraries have free internet access and you could look at your team's site, music sites or find out about a favourite author or TV programme. For information about safe websites for children go to the Parents Information Network at [www.pin.org.uk](http://www.pin.org.uk) or Parents Online at [www.parentsonline.gov.uk](http://www.parentsonline.gov.uk)
- Start a family recipe collection – cut out ideas from newspapers and magazines.
- Cut up a cartoon strip from a newspaper and get your child to put it back in the right order.
- Talk about the adverts and think about what messages they are trying to get across when you are watching TV or reading a newspaper. Why not ask the 'expert' (your child) – to 'read' the advert; encourage them to use technical terms they have learnt to talk about the language and style of the advert.



## What should I know?

Tips for hearing children read:

- Use praise every time your child reads, even if they don't get everything right first time. A 'well done' is very motivating.
- Use 'pause, prompt, praise' – wait before you correct a mistake so that your child has a chance to get it right themselves, then give your child clues to help them get the word right, and finally praise them if they get the word right or even try to!
- Wait until the end of a line before correcting mistakes when you are reading together. This will give time for self correction.
- If your child doesn't know a word, get them to guess what it means from the other words around, or say 'something' instead and go back later to work out the word.
- Spending some time reading together each week can really help your child progress with reading. Long words can be made easier by clapping out the chunks of the word (syllables). For





example, there are two in luck-y and three in an-i-mal.

- Some children need lots of practice and others want to read the same book again and again. This is a normal part of learning to read.

Once older children have got the mechanics of reading (the 'how to'), there is a lot parents can do to help children enjoy reading. It is very important for children to see reading as something they can do in their spare time for fun, as well as a tool they need to help them at school. This is because research shows that children who read for pleasure do better at school.

### **Instant ideas:**

- Join the local library – it costs nothing to join and books can be borrowed for free. There are lots of events going on in libraries that you can go to, and libraries can give your child the chance to choose from hundreds of books. All libraries have free internet access as well.
- Show an interest in the books your child brings home from school. This will remind them that reading is important to you.
- Get your child to read to younger brothers and sisters –this will make them feel like the 'expert' and encourage your younger children to read as well.



### **What should I know?**

Don't forget that older children enjoy being read to. You could also read your own childhood favourites together (although don't be offended if they don't enjoy them as much as you – everyone has a different reading personality!). It is important to let children choose what they want to read – after all adults don't like to be told what they can and can't read. If you aren't sure about choosing books, a teacher, librarian or bookseller can help you. The Booktrust (020 8516 2977) offers a guide to the 100 best children's books every year, and there are lots of websites (which you can access free at your local library) that can help as well. See the Help section at the end of this guide for ideas. Don't forget magazines, comics, newspapers and non-fiction (fact) books. Research shows that as long as children choose to read for pleasure their education benefits.

