

How to support your child in reading at home



“There is more treasure in books than in all the pirate’s loot on Treasure Island”

Walt Disney



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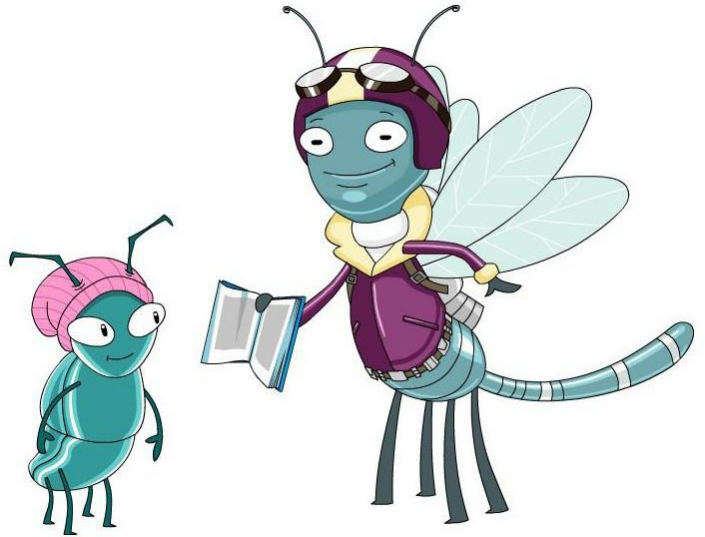
As parents, we all want the best for our children. We're probably all aware that it's important to make sure they are confident, fluent readers who enjoy reading, but often it's hard to know where to start. Should you read to your baby? What can you do to help get your children familiar with words and reading before school? And how do you help them progress at school when the teaching is different nowadays?

We hope that this guide will help answer some of your questions, as well as give you some advice and inspiration on how to help children enjoy reading.

Why is reading so important?

Evidence suggests that children who read for enjoyment every day not only perform better in reading tests than those who don't, but also develop a broader vocabulary, increased general knowledge and a better understanding of other cultures.

In fact, there's evidence to suggest that reading for pleasure is more likely to determine whether a child does well at school than their social or economic background.



What difference could I make as a parent?

The short answer is: a lot! Parents are by far the most important educators in a child's life and it's never too young for a child to start, even if you're only reading with your child for a few minutes a day.

Before they're born, babies learn to recognise their parents' voices. Reading to your baby from the time they're born gives them the comfort of your voice and increases their exposure to language.

Building vocabulary and understanding

Learning to read is about listening and understanding as well as working out print. Through hearing stories, children are exposed to a rich and wide vocabulary. This helps them build their own vocabulary and improve their understanding when they listen, which is vital as they start to read. It's important for them to understand how stories work as well. Even if your child doesn't understand every word, they'll hear new sounds, words and phrases which they can then try out, copying what they have heard.

As children start to learn to read at school, you can play an important role in helping to keep them interested in books, finding out what interests them and helping them to find books that will be engaging and fun for them. Give time to helping them practise reading the books they will bring home from school.



Tips for great reading at home



Top 10 tips to help children enjoy reading

To help make reading enjoyable and fun, we asked experts and authors what they recommend to help get kids reading.

1. **Make books part of your family life** – Always have books around so that you and your children are ready to read whenever there's a chance.
2. **Join your local library** – Get your child a library card. You'll find the latest videogames, blu-rays and DVDs, plus tons and tons of fantastic books. Allow them to pick their own books, encouraging their own interests.
3. **Match their interests** – Help them find the right book - it doesn't matter if it's fiction, poetry, comic books or non-fiction.
4. **All reading is good** – Don't discount non-fiction, comics, graphic novels, magazines and leaflets. Reading is reading and it is all good.
5. **Get comfortable!** – Snuggle up somewhere warm and cosy with your child, either in bed, on a beanbag or on the sofa, or make sure they have somewhere comfy when reading alone.
6. **Ask questions** – To keep them interested in the story, ask your child questions as you read such as, 'What do you think will happen next?' or 'Where did we get to last night? Can you remember what had happened already?'
7. **Read whenever you get the chance** – Bring along a book or magazine for any time your child has to wait, such as at a doctor's surgery.
8. **Read again and again** – Encourage your child to re-read favourite books and poems. Re-reading helps to build up fluency and confidence.
9. **Bedtime stories** – Regularly read with your child or children at bedtime. It's a great way to end the day and to spend valuable time with your child.
10. **Rhyme and repetition** – Books and poems which include rhyme and repetition are great for encouraging your child or children to join in and remember the words.



Understanding phonics

My child has just started school and is learning to read via phonics. What is phonics?

With phonics, children are taught to read by learning the phonemes (sounds) that represent letters or groups of graphemes (letters).

With this knowledge, children can begin to read words by learning how to blend the sounds together. Unlocking how this alphabetic code works means they can learn to decode any word. For example, when taught the sounds **/t/**, **/p/**, **/a/**, **/l/** and **/s/** early on, children can read words such as it, is, tap, tip, pat, sip and sat by blending the individual sounds together to make the whole word.

These words can also be broken down (segmented) into their phonemes for spelling. For example, the word 'sat' has three phonemes, **/s/**, **/a/** and **/t/** which the children learn to write with the three graphemes (letters) 's', 'a' and 't' that they have been taught.

They will also be taught to read words – such as 'once', 'was' or 'have' – which don't follow the phonic 'rules'. They'll build up a stock of these tricky words that they can recognize straight away.



Top tips on phonics

Say the sounds correctly

It's important that the sounds are pronounced correctly, as they would sound in speech. Try not to add 'uh' to consonant sounds, such as /t/ and /p/, as this makes it trickier to blend the sounds together into words.

Link sounds and letters to make words

Children are taught in school to quickly see a link between the phoneme (sounds) and a written representation of that sound (grapheme). At home, encourage your child

to do the same when playing with fridge magnets in the kitchen, for example, or 'writing' when you are writing.

Don't be scared – make it fun!

Phonics can seem daunting for parents who were probably taught to read in a rather different way. However, simple games such as 'I spy' are great for helping reading, because the children have to listen to sounds. Say, "I spy, with my little eye, something that begins with (for example) the sound 'f-f-f'" Look at the 'football' or the 'fridge'. Make sure you refer to the first sound (not the first letter). Take it in turns, with

What if children just don't enjoy reading?

If you think your child is having problems reading, the first step is always to speak to your child's teacher and share your concerns. Many children learn at different rates, and you shouldn't get anxious. Remember that anxious children can't learn, and that early enjoyment of books and stories lasts for life.



What do I do if my child doesn't enjoy reading?

- Make sure your child isn't tired, hungry or desperate to watch their favourite TV programme when you read to them. Sit with them for a short time every day and read a book with them on a subject that interests them, whether that's cars, animals or sports. Don't expect them to read it for themselves. Just show them how interesting it is to be able to read so that they want to do it for themselves.
- For many children, especially boys as they get older, non-fiction books are more interesting than fiction, so it may be as simple as changing the type of books you are reading together. Talk to your teacher or a local children's librarian to see what books are available that match your child's interests.
- Give plenty of praise. Let your child know how pleased you are when he or she looks at a book. Show interest in what they have chosen. Children really do develop at their own rates when it comes to reading.

My son is switching off reading - what can I do?

Research shows that boys are less likely to enjoy reading than girls. More boys than girls struggle with reading and writing at school and boys are more likely to say they don't spend any time reading outside the classroom. But there are ways you can help:

- It's important to **make sure that you're reading something with your son which interests him**. Many boys like non-fiction books, so try asking at your local library for recommendations – it may be that he'll enjoy reading Horrible Histories or the Guinness Book of Records more than fiction.
- Role models are also important. **Make sure boys see their dads, uncles or granddads reading**, even if it's a newspaper, so that it seems familiar and they can copy their reading behaviour.
- Finally, **praise** your son when something is read well. Equally, if he reads something incorrectly, don't make him feel that this is bad - mistakes are just part of the learning process.



The reading diary

Regular reading has a positive impact on children's learning across the whole curriculum. It is one of the most important things children can do as part of their home learning. We recommend that children read a little every day.

When you have read with your child, it's great to write a short note in their reading diary. This will mean the adults who read with your child in school know what they have done really well in, and what they need more help with. The more home and school talk, the more we'll be able to support your child in their progress.

As children get older, they should become responsible for completing their own reading diary and may want to read on their own or to younger siblings. This doesn't mean they may not still enjoy reading with an adult or listening to books read by adults.

Sometimes books, which seem a little easy for your child or ones that they have read before, will be sent home. This is because they give your child confidence and raises their self-esteem when it comes to reading. They can also focus on expression and fluency. Here are some words you might see in the reading diary or want to use yourself:

Comprehension – understanding what you are reading.

Expression – making your voice sound interesting for the listener. This may be changing pitch, tone, volume or rhythm.

Fluency – when the reading is smooth and quick enough, pauses are made at commas and full stops.

Punctuation – full stops, commas, exclamation marks, question marks, speech marks...

Sounding-out – saying the different sounds you can see in a word, this helps you with words that you haven't learnt yet. c-oi-n

Blending – blending (or pushing) the sounds together smoothly using your voice. Use blending after you have sounded-out the word out.

Tricky word – a word that cannot be sounded-out, like: one, people, was, said. These words must be learnt by heart.

Non-fiction – these books are true and are about real things, people, places, events. We get information from non-fiction books.

Fiction – Stories that are made-up and are not true.

Support From School

If you need any more support or advice about your child's reading, please don't hesitate to contact your child's teacher.

