

The beauty of reading together: A guide for parents

READING ALLOWS US TO SEE AND UNDERSTAND
THE WORLD THROUGH THE EYES OF OTHERS.
A GOOD BOOK IS AN EMPATHY ENGINE.

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Reading to your child

Of all the support you can give your child, the most important job you'll probably do is helping with reading. That's because learning to read is best taught on a one-to-one basis, so giving your child a bit of shared reading time every day will make a big difference. They should be reading a range of genres and reading out loud to enable them to develop expression, intonation, confidence and fluidity in their reading. This should not stop even when a child becomes an independent reader. Reading together helps build up background general knowledge which is key to understanding texts. If you don't know anything about the subject you are reading, it makes it difficult to understand the text.

We know that being able to read underpins everything a child does in school and is directly linked to their self-esteem, confidence and achievements as they go through life.

It is also important for children to be read to. It is recognised that listening to stories is 'good' for children who are learning to read. You can motivate your child to read by regularly sharing a book with them. Your child will sense your love of books, your enjoyment of a good story and your appreciation of good illustrations. With younger children it can be fun to read familiar stories together, pointing at the words and allowing children to enjoy the stories, join in with well-known stories and develop ideas of the relationship between sound and print. With children of any age it will help to develop imagination and enrich vocabulary development.

Supporting the confident reader

Confident readers have reached the stage where they no longer wish to read to an adult and want to read silently to themselves. The interaction between the parent and child changes at this stage. To ensure that the child's reading development continues to move forward, we would encourage parents to question the child about what they are reading, at an appropriate time, to extend their knowledge and share their enjoyment of the book.

Reading together will also allow you to look at the language choices made by writers, their possible reasons for making those choices and the effect the choices have on the reader. Discussing alternative choices and their effects can be a good way to begin discussion about the author's language and an opportunity to develop vocabulary generally.

Making links: as adults, we are constantly making links between ideas and experiences. Good readers connect the book they are reading with real life experiences; with other books read and stories heard; with films; and with the context in which they were written. A child reading 'Goodnight Mister Tom', for example, will need to place the story within the context that it was written (the Second World War) to fully understand it. They might also link it with other stories read, such as 'Friend or Foe' or 'Carrie's War'.

Helping your child read a word...

- Which letter sounds (phonemes) do you recognise? Can you blend them together? (If you are unsure of what this means, please speak to a class teacher to explain).
- Does the word make sense? Read the sentence again to check.
- Is there another word that would make sense?
- Is it a word you know?
- Have you read the word before? Is it on another page?
- Are there any bits of the word you recognise?
- Miss out the word, say 'mmmm', finish the sentence. Then go back and work out what the word was.
- In a rhyming book, think of a word that rhymes.
- Use the first 1 or 2 sounds with another strategy
- Always go back and read the sentence again!

Questions to ask before they start reading the book....

- What is the title of the book?
- What kind of book is it? (Fiction, non-fiction, poetry, short story etc)
- Who is the author/illustrator?
- Have you read any other books by the same author?
- What made you choose this book? (Author, cover, illustration, recommendation etc)
- Did you read the blurb (the summary on the back of the book) before selecting the book?
- Could you tell anything about the book before you started reading it?
What were the clues?
- Have you read this book before? Why have you chosen it again?

Questions to ask before your child begins, resumes or during their book...

- What has happened so far?
- What do you think will happen next?
- What do you think about...?
- What do you think that word means?
- What are the clues that make you think this?
- How would you like the story to end?
- Are you involved in the story? Why?
- Where is the story set? Is there a description?
- When is the story set? (Past, present, future)
- Who are the characters in the story? Who do you like/dislike? and Why?
- Do you feel similar to any of the characters? Tell me what is similar?

Questions to ask when your child has finished their book...

- Was the book as you expected?
- Was there anything you liked or disliked about the story?
- At what point did you decide you liked or disliked the story?
- If you have read this book before, did you enjoy it more this time?

Why?

- Did you notice anything special about the way language is used in this book? (dialect, descriptive writing etc)
- If you had written this book, how would you have made it better?
- Has anything that happens in this book ever happened to you?
- Is there more than one story happening at the same time?
- Would you recommend this book to your friends? Tell me what you would say to a friend?
- Can you describe an exciting moment or favourite part of the story?

Inference 'Reading between the lines'...

Inferring is working out the author wants you to think. An inference is "reading between the lines" to understand things not directly stated by the author. Inferences are based on information stated in the text as well as what is known from personal experience which relates to the passage being read. Encourage your child to make inferences based on clues in the text. Their understanding of the context of the book will help them to develop this important skill.

Can your child become a story detective?

How parents can help with developing inference skills...

- Ask "What do you think?" and "What struck you here?" when you are reading or talking.
- Explain that we make inferences all day long, not just when reading. Encourage a conversation with your child about this.
- Model your own behind-the-scenes thinking: this technique is called a 'think-aloud'. For example, "How do you know the dog is sad?" When your child replies, ask "What clues helped you figure that out? Show me the words."
- Similarly, when they have used context to puzzle out the meaning of an unknown word, ask "What helped you figure that out?"

Here are some examples of inference:

1. *The sandwich you left on the table is gone. Crumbs lead to your dog's bed, and a piece of meat hangs out of her mouth.*

Using the evidence from this passage, you can infer she has eaten the sandwich.

2. *Harry's face turned red and he started to yell, balling his hands up into shaking fists.*

From the evidence in this passage you can infer that he's really angry about something, though we don't yet know what it is.

Websites to help the development of reading at home and school....

- [Active Learn](#) Our online learning environment, with lots of fun books for children to read/share.
- [BBC Nursery songs](#) A collection of nursery songs from the Early Learning series Listen and Play and Playtime, both of which are currently available on iplayer and as podcasts
- [Book Trust](#) Suggested books for children, advice on how to read with your child, book lists, fun games, competitions to win free books, Children's Book Club etc.
- [Love Reading](#) Expert recommendations and opening extracts of books.
- [Oxford Owl](#) Phonics advice and access to free E-Books. Free to register.
- [Pearson](#) Publisher's website designed to give parents help and advice for reading with children.
- [Phonics](#) A useful website featuring free resources for KS1 (and the option of subscribing)
- [Read for my school](#) Reading competition for Years 3- 4 featuring a great range of books, including those for the struggling reader.

Others – mainly American, so be aware of different spellings/ pronunciation

- [Non-fiction Magazine](#) A non fiction magazine for younger children, which they can follow along with as it is read to them.
- [Starfall](#) Some free content on here for beginning readers.
- [Storyline](#) Storyline Online features accomplished actors and actresses reading some of their favourite children's books. Each story comes with a free Activity Guide and can be viewed on YouTube or SchoolTube.
- [Storynory](#) Storynory features a collection of original, fairytale, and classic children's audio stories.