

HELPING YOUR CHILD READ AT HOME



It's one of the most common concerns for parents of primary school age children.

How can I best help my child to read at home?

Teachers are asked about this all the time, and reading progress is one of the areas that parents worry about more than any other.

So here are some tips for supporting your child's development as a reader. Put as many of these things in place as you can, then relax! You're doing your bit, and your child *will* respond.

1. Long before your child starts formally learning to read, instill a love of reading in them by sharing bed-time (and other-time-of-the-day!) stories. This special, one-to-one time, where you and your child can escape into all sorts of adventures and amazing worlds, is precious. Research has shown that a love of reading is a stronger indicator of academic success than wealth or class background. As you enjoy stories together your child will soon begin to realise that those funny marks on the page that sit alongside the pictures are the story, and in time they'll want to learn how to decipher them for themselves.
2. Selecting books with flaps, pop-up pictures, secret compartments, buzzers and fuzzy textures will engage all of their senses. You don't have to spend lots of money – make good use of your local library.
3. Frequently let your child choose the book they want you to share with them... grit your teeth if this seems to be the one hundredth time in a row that they have chosen the same book! Young children love repetition and familiarity, and it really does help them to develop reading skills! Encourage them to join in with the bits they recognise.
4. Make (even a little) time for yourself to read, and make it clear that you enjoy your personal reading time. If your children grow up seeing you prioritising reading at least some of the time, they will see reading as something to value in their own lives.
5. Look for opportunities to encourage your child's reading skills when you're out and about together. Even before they can read, children can begin to recognise signs for *toilets, entrance, exit, stop, danger* etc.
6. Continue to read with your child way past the usual early years. There's plenty of evidence that reading with and to children even if they are already fluent, continues to develop their vocabulary and joy in reading. It also demonstrates that reading is something to be enjoyed throughout their life.



Would you like some **FREE activities and games to motivate your child to read at home?**
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HELPING YOUR CHILD READ AT HOME - Pt 2

7. Read as many different types of book with your child as you can. Not all children are motivated most by stories. Finding interesting non-fiction books to share with your nature loving or car loving child can be just as stimulating for them, as they realise that books can open up a whole world of information about topics they are fascinated by. Also, trying different genres of stories will expose them to all sorts of fiction so that they can begin to develop their own preferences – rather than yours! If your child enjoys looking at junk mail, encourage it. There's nothing wrong with checking out the catalogue from the local supermarket or toy store. It is all developing lifelong skills in literacy.
8. When your child is sent home with a book to read, don't rush it. The fact that they read it through with you isn't the end of it. In the early stages children recite rather than read. The books are simple and repetitive... perhaps every page says, "I am a..." So your child will know to say, "I am a..." then look at the picture, and say, "dog". This is exactly what they should be doing. Don't ever be tempted to cover the pictures. They are an important part of the reading process. Ask your child to point to a particular word... they may not know that word yet, but they can work it out from the phrase they have learned. They know that the word "I" starts the sentence, so they know that the first word on the page must be "I". Keep it light, and fun. Gradually see if they can recognise those simple words out of context too.
9. In the early days, read *to* your child, and discuss what you're reading. After a while you can begin to read *with* your child. Let them decide if they want to read aloud to you sometimes. Later, listen to them read, just stepping in to help out with more challenging words when they need it. Later still, when your child is developing fluency, encourage them to read with expression. Playing around with goofy voices for different characters can be fun, as long as it doesn't spoil a tense or dramatic story that deserves to be taken more seriously!
10. Drop questions into your reading sessions to test and stretch their understanding of the text. Just every now and again - don't over-do it or reading will become a chore!

Try questions such as:

- a. What do you think Rob is going to do?
- b. Why do you think Susan said that?
- c. What did the teacher mean?
- d. What do you think Alex should do?
- e. What do you like about this book?

Above all, enjoy the experience. In our house, story time is a wonderful time of togetherness that we treasure and learn from. Some of the books will become favourites that will remain a part of your family for a very long time.

What family favourites would you like to share with our class?

