

Top Tips for developing enthusiastic readers!

Read with your child at least once every day. The earlier you start the better; even the youngest child can look at the pictures, listen to your voice and turn pages. Research shows what common sense tells us: the more children read, the better they are at reading and the more pleasure they get from reading. The reverse also holds true: children who read very little usually have poor reading skills. Reading is a struggle for them, and they avoid it whenever possible.

Continue reading aloud to older children even after they have learned to read by themselves. You might want to encourage them to read to you some of the time, or read to younger brothers and sisters. This shared enjoyment will continue to strengthen your child's enjoyment and appreciation of reading.

Talk to your child (not just about books) and listen to them as they talk with you. Good speaking and listening skills are fundamental to learning to read. Play games that encourage careful listening to the sounds in words and looking for letter patterns. Your child may enjoy singing songs and nursery rhymes; this is a good way of developing an awareness not only of the sounds in words, but rhythm and rhyme too.

Be a reading role model. Let your child see you reading for pleasure in your spare time, and share some interesting things with them that you have read about in books, newspapers or magazines.

Make sure your child has plenty to read. Take them to the library regularly, explore the children's section together and ask the librarian for any books they can recommend. Don't forget that magazines, newspapers, catalogues, travel brochures, match day programmes, sports reports, websites, 'how to....' manuals, recipe books and comic books can also provide interesting reading material.

Notice what interests your child and use their interests and hobbies as a starting point for reading.

Respect your child's choices. Don't try to persuade your child to finish a book they don't like, recommend putting the book aside and trying another one. On the other hand, if you have a child who loves reading books about football, let them read as many as they like!

Help your child build a personal library. Children's books, new or used, make great gifts and are good rewards for reading. Set aside a special place for your child to store their books, and encourage them to build up a collection of books that are special to them.

Show your child you are interested in their reading. Listen to them read aloud, and praise their newly acquired skills. When your child reads aloud, don't feel they have to get every word right, even good readers skip words or pronounce them wrongly now and then.

Go places and do things with your child to build their background knowledge and vocabulary, and to give them a basis for understanding what they read. Good readers constantly make links between what they read and their personal experiences. The richer the child's life experiences, the better chance they have of understanding a wide range of texts.

Tell stories. It's a fun way to teach story structure, pass on family history and build your children's listening and thinking skills.



Play games. Check out your board games for games that require players to read spaces, cards and directions, and look out for spelling games like Scrabble or Boggle.

Show your child that reading can be useful, a way to gather information for making paper aeroplanes, or learning about skateboards or planning a holiday.



Most of all have fun!

The Big Eight – helping your children understand what they're reading

Good readers are active readers; they are busy 'doing things' in their heads. Talk to your child about these reading behaviours and help them practise them when they are reading.

Activating prior knowledge – Before you start reading anything with your child, take time to talk to them about the subject. Use the title, the front cover, the pictures to discuss anything they might know already about what they're about to read.

Self monitoring – Tell your child that the whole point of reading is to understand, if they haven't understood, they haven't been reading.

Visualising – Good readers use all five senses to create pictures in their heads, and even hear themselves reading the text. Encourage your child to 'hear' their reading voice in their heads, and to 'see pictures' created by the words in the text.

Questioning – Good readers are constantly asking questions about what they read, before they read it, "What's this going to be about?" "Am I going to like these characters?" while they're reading, "Does this make sense?" "What does the writer mean by using that word?" and after reading, "Did I enjoy that?" "Did I agree with that?" Encourage your child to ask questions about what they're reading.

Making connections - Good readers make connections with what they read in three ways

Text to self – "This reminds me of when I..."

Text to text – "I read another book about this..."

Text to world – "This is like something I saw on the television..."

Talk to your child about what they're reading, and encourage them to make these connections.

Inferring – When we're reading, a lot of the information is inferred, not stated clearly by the author. Children need to be shown how to look for clues in the text to work out what the writer is telling us about a character by the name they're given or the description of what they look like. Encourage your child to do this by asking questions like, "What do you think the author really means here?"

Evaluating – Children should be expected to respond to what they've read. This can be encouraged from the very earliest stages of reading with questions like, "What did you think of that book?" "What was your favourite bit?"

Summarising – If children have read and understood a text, they should be able to summarise it. A fun way to do this would be to set a challenge e.g. "Tell me that story in 30 words!"

Fix-up strategies –

What can you say when your child says "What do I do if I come to a word I can't read?"

Sound it out. Look at the letters in the word – what sounds do they make? Blend the sounds together, listen to the sounds they make, can you hear a word?

Chunk the word. Break the words up into chunks or syllables. Try to say each syllable in turn then blend the syllables together. Do they make a word?

Look at the picture. Do the pictures give any clues to what the word is?

Make a sensible prediction. Think about what the word might be, does it make sense in the sentence, look at the word, does it start with the same letter as the word you're thinking of?

Carry on to the end of the sentence. Think about the sentence you've read, does the whole sentence help you work out what the word is?

Go back to the beginning of the sentence and start again. Does this help you work out what the word is?

Try reading the sentence again. Sometimes you will need to read the sentence three times before you get it right.

Do you really need to know what this word is? Sometimes we don't have to read every single word, if the word is not important and you can understand the sentence without it, just carry on.



Reading with Your Child

