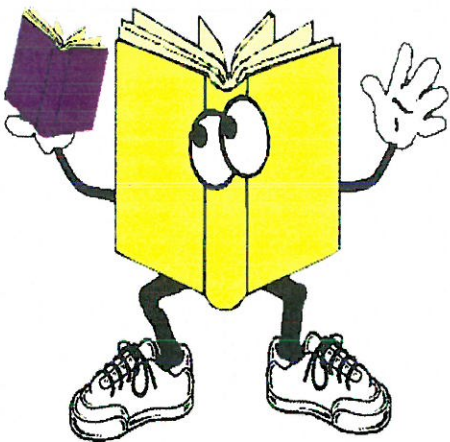


Helping at Home with Reading



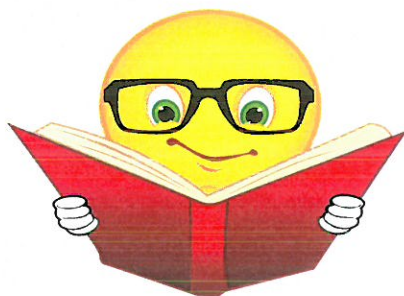
Helping at home with Reading

Positivity

Children need to feel as positive as possible and able to succeed at reading - especially if negative feelings have already started to be associated through previous failure. This can lead to the negative cycle of fearing failure and therefore failing (learned helplessness). It is important that you show you care about your child's reading and have confidence in his or her ability.

It is also important to encourage your child to read. This can lead to conflict so keeping the sessions short and offering a small reward can help. Some children who have reading difficulties are frightened or put off by print. If they are afraid of making mistakes they will avoid reading, therefore it is important that you gently encourage them in order to boost their confidence when reading. Don't worry about moving on to read harder books at this point. It is far better for a child to be given plenty of time on a particular level.

It is vital to give praise often. However, if a child has read a passage poorly they will know if you are misleading them by saying they have read well. It is far better to say "Don't worry, keep at it" and praise the effort not the results - picking up on something they have done well, however small can maintain the level of positivity.



Enjoyment

Try to treat reading as something that can be enjoyed by both of you:

- make yourselves comfortable and do not pressurise your child or it could turn into an ordeal.
- reading for enjoyment's sake is just as important as reading for information.
- Read until you have both had enough and choose a natural break in the story. Note in the book where you have stopped for next time.
- Regular reading sessions are most beneficial. It is far better to read for 5 or 10 minutes a night rather than one half hour session during the week.
- Provide a good role model as far as possible - if children see their parents reading and using the library they are more likely to do so themselves.

The reading session

The guidelines below incorporate some techniques used in a reading programme that is being used in schools throughout the country to boost the reading of those that experience difficulties with reading. The techniques have proved to be highly beneficial but do take practice. Don't worry about getting it all right at once but do try to follow as many as is possible.

If a child cannot read a word, suggest firstly that they read to the end of the sentence and return to the difficult word to try to work out what it could be. The ability to predict which word makes sense in a sentence is a useful tool in reading. If a child reads a word incorrectly but the word makes sense, do not interrupt them. It is not essential that every word is read correctly. If the mistake they've made doesn't make sense then stop them and ask them to think about what they've just read, pointing out the incorrect word. Pause for 6-8 seconds (silently counting). This at first may seem like a long time and may initially be uncomfortable for you and/or your child, but it is really beneficial for your child to have this thinking/word building time and to realise they aren't under pressure to rush. After this pause, if your child is still unable to read the word, give one or two appropriate prompts to encourage problem solving of the word.

e.g. What does the word begin with?
Can you split that word up?
Can you blend those sounds? (consonant blends such as bl,br,ch,cr,fr,fl,sh,th,wh,)
Does that word make sense?
If your child is still unable to read the word, simply tell them what it says.



Praise is highly important to promote self-esteem and maintain positivity. Here are some specific examples of where praise should be awarded which also highlight good reading skills. Praise your child when:

- S/he attempts/is able to decode a word by using either the first letter, more than one letter, by blending sounds (as consonant blends above) or chunking longer words into syllables.
- S/he substitutes a meaningful word.
- S/he self-corrects.
- S/he pays attention to punctuation.
- S/he reads with expression.

Praise can be given quietly throughout a reading session and also the positive aspects of your child's particular successes discussed at the end. It is important to explain using the above suggestions what exactly it was that was good about how your child tackled the text.

Revisiting words that your child struggled with/got wrong at the end of the reading session can be very beneficial. Select one or two words that your child should possibly be familiar with. Making a list of these words and revisiting them at the beginning of every reading session is a useful process, as is learning how to spell those words.

If a child has struggled with reading then often fully understanding what has just been read can be difficult. Sometimes children can read accurately but may still struggle to access meaning. Some useful questions for making your child stop and think about what they are reading/have read are listed on the next page and are also a useful gauge for you to check understanding:

What are the names of the main characters?
Why does (the character)....?
Which character would you like to be and why?
Why did the character say...(quote from the text)?
How would you feel if....(something that happened in the story)?
What did you find interesting about...?
What did you learn about...?
What would you do if you were (character)?

Some of these questions can be asked as your child is reading and some may be more appropriate at the end - this depends on what feels natural and comfortable and this applies for what you decide to ask as well. Do not expect perfect recall. Follow up activities are also useful in producing evidence of understanding. These can take many forms such as illustrations, book report or question and answer sessions. It is important not to destroy the pleasure of reading by demanding too much.

Repetition

Children may like to read the story more than once, to gain confidence. Repetition is important for those with reading difficulties and so either repeating the same book or reading a book with a number of similar words will be of benefit.



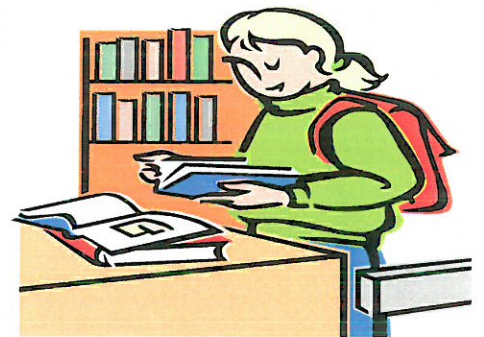
Putting reading to use

Put successful reading to good use. Allow your child to read the story or piece to younger children or let them hear themselves reading well by recording them. It may seem boring, but let him/her read the same piece more than once if s/he wants to. It all helps to build up their confidence.

Choosing a book

The choice of a book to read is very important. Try to find a book that really interests your child. It does not have to be a story book as many children prefer books which give information. However, giving a free choice of book to your child may result in the choice of a far too difficult book. A careful balance needs to be maintained between interest and readability. For older children with reading difficulties do not choose books which are obviously meant for much younger children. Nothing will turn an eleven or twelve year old off reading quicker than having to read about six or seven year olds. It would be much better to choose a suitable factual book.

Many children like magazines, particularly about their interests. Starting with magazines can be a good introduction to reading sessions even if the first few times are mainly spent discussing the pictures and reading as many words as possible on the page rather than reading sentence by sentence. The same can be said for comics, although most comics tend to have limited vocabulary which does not extend children. Nevertheless as long as they read books as well there is nothing wrong with occasionally reading magazines or comics. Enjoying and becoming comfortable with reading sessions and allowing your child to do the same are highly important factors in successful reading.



Get to know the book/reading material

Allow your child to familiarise themselves with the reading material by allowing them to look through it before settling down to read. Preparing your child for what they are about to read is important for allowing them to tackle the text with more confidence.

Give them an overall/brief description of what is going to be read so that they can concentrate on reading for meaning. You can get this information from the back of the book and by looking at the pictures. Pictures can be really useful to discuss and aid in understanding the story/information.

- Point to and say any words that you think your child might struggle with (particularly names/bigger words/subject specific words). This step allows them to concentrate on words accurately and read with more familiarity. This should also reduce some of the barriers that may otherwise lead to a sense of failure. This step is also useful in determining whether the reading material is suitable for your child. If you find you're pointing to lots of words it may indicate that the book might prove too difficult, too few and it may not be challenging enough. Starting on an easier level for your child is better than starting at a level which proves too difficult. If a child is experiencing reading success then they are more likely to enjoy it.

Silent reading

Let your children read silently at times, and then talk about what he she has read. Look for evidence of understanding

Indirect reading

There is a great deal of what can be called indirect reading that could be done. This gives practice and shows how useful reading is. Make collections of words that appear in T.V. advertising. These will be meaningful to your children and will soon be learnt and perhaps used in a scrapbook or poster. Encourage your child to look up the times of T.V. programmes. You may need to write each title on a card so they can be matched. Soon the titles will be read independently.

On journeys encourage your children to find the names of places on a map and then look out for them on signposts.

Games

Any games that involve reading words at the appropriate level are useful as children tend not to see this as reading work and usually have a better attitude towards participating as a result. However, this is still very useful practice of their reading skills.

TRUGS is an anagram of Teaching reading using games. The company that produce these resources have specific sets designed for using at home. The sets are available at different levels and contain a range of games to improve recognition of high frequency words. They are available only from the company who produce them at www.readsuccessfully.com

If all this information seems daunting then remember that reading sessions are meant to be enjoyable and not an ordeal for you or your child. Try to use as many of the suggestions as possible but without it becoming a chore and you will soon develop your own style that feels natural and comfortable and leads to enjoyment and success for you and your child.

