

Reading with your child

Parents often ask me how they can help their children learn to read and develop a love of reading. Reading plays an important role in later school success.

Here are some practical ideas for helping school-age children learn to read.

1. Talk to your child (a lot).

Reading is a language activity, and if you want to learn language, you need to hear it first. Studies have shown that exposing your child to a variety of words helps in her development of reading skills.

2. Read to your kids.

Read to your children EVERY DAY! If a parent or caregiver can't read or can't read English, there are alternatives, such as using audiobooks. Research shows benefits for kids as young as 9-months-old, and it could be effective even earlier than that. Reading to kids exposes them to richer vocabulary than they usually hear and can have positive impacts on their language, intelligence, and later literacy achievement. There are so many wonderful children's books (see our recommendations).

3. Teach phonics (letter names and their sounds).

You can't sound out words or write them without knowing the letter sounds. Phonics doesn't stop after Year 1! You just need a pencil and paper and a website to help you with the sounds!. Keep the phonics interaction brief and fun, no more than 5–10 minutes.

4. Listen to your child read.

When your child brings books home from school, have her/him read to you. If it doesn't sound good (mistakes, choppy reading), have her read it again. Or read it to her, and then have her try to read it herself. Studies show that this kind of repeated oral reading makes students better readers, even when it is done at home.

5. Ask questions.

When your child reads, get her/him to retell the story or information. If it's a story, ask who it was about and what happened. If it's an informational text, have your child explain what it was about and how it worked, or what its parts were. Reading involves not just sounding out words, but thinking about and remembering ideas and events. Improving reading comprehension skills early will prepare her for subsequent success in more difficult texts.

6. Make reading a regular activity in your home.

Make reading a part of your daily life, and kids will learn to love it. Take your child to the library to get books. This will develop lifelong readers. Set aside some time when everyone turns off the TV and the web and does nothing but read. Make it fun, too. When my children finished reading a book that had been made into a film, we'd make popcorn and watch the film together. The point is to make reading a regular enjoyable part of your family routine.

7. If your child Gets Stuck on a Word

Knowing what to do is important but knowing what NOT to do is important as well. Here's a list of Nots:

- Immediately giving her/him the word
- Having your child guess the word from the picture
- Having your child guess the word from the context of the story
- Telling your child that she read the word on the other page

Good readers recognize words by sight. When they come to an unfamiliar word, they use spelling patterns (phonics skills) to quickly decode the word. Most of our emphasis needs to be on helping our children use the sounds and symbols of the word to figure out unknown words. This also helps children with their spelling. We want to discourage guessing at words as this can easily become a habit.

Now here's what to do (example):

Your child is reading the sentence:

They had fun playing in the rain.

She/he gets stuck on the word "rain". Your first step would be to look at the word "rain" and determine that the "r" makes the /r/ sound, the "ai" makes the long a vowel sound and the "n" makes the /n/ sound. So what's probably tripping her/him up is the "ai". You can now say, "let's say the sounds we know" - /r/- (point to the ai)- "do you know what sound 'ai' makes?" If she doesn't, say "'ai' makes the 'a' sound and /n/-/r/ /a/ /n/ "rain".

8. Questions to ask your children when reading (based on content domains).

Question Stems:

2a: Vocabulary – give/ explain the meaning of words in context

Question:

- Explain two things that the words . . . suggest about . . .
- Find and copy two words from the poem/story that show that...
- Which word most closely matches the meaning of.....
- Give the meaning of the word in this sentence.
- What does mean ?
- Find and copy one word from page that tells you
- What other words/phrases could the author have used?
- What do the words and suggest about the character, setting and mood?
- Which word tells you that....?

2b: Retrieving - retrieve and record information / identify key details from fiction and non-fiction

- Look at page - according to the text, what couldWrite down three things that you are told about
- What was revealed at the end of the story ?
- Circle the correct option.
- Give two reasons why . . .
- Look at the paragraph beginning . . .
- What conclusion does draw from this ?
- Give one piece of advice that gives

- Where did she live?
- Who are the characters in the book?
- Where in the book would you find...?
- What do you think is happening here?
- Through whose eyes is the story told?
- Which part of the story best describes the setting?
- What part of the story do you like best?
- What evidence do you have to show this?
- When did the story take place?
- What did she look like?
- Who was she?

2c: Summarising - summarise main ideas from more than one paragraph

- What's the main point in this paragraph?
- Can you sum up what happens in these paragraphs?
- In a short sentence, sum up these paragraphs.
- Sort the information in these paragraphs. What heading would you give them
- Make a table to show the information in these paragraphs.
- Can you number these events 1-5 in the order that they happened?

2d: Inferring - make inferences from the text / explain and justify inferences with evidence from the text.

- How can you tell that ...?
- What impressions of do you get from these two paragraphs?
- What evidence is there of/that?

- Why does she do this?
- In what way does he think?
- What are three ways that shows?
- Which words give you that impression?
- How do you feel about...?
- Can you explain why...
- What do these words mean and why do you think the author chose them?
- Find and copy a group of words which show that...
- How do these words make the reader feel?
- How do the descriptions of show that they are
- How can you tell that.....
- What impression of do you get from these paragraphs?
- Who is telling the story?

2e: Predicting- predict what might happen from details stated and implied

- What is happening now? What happened before this?

What will happen after?

- What does this paragraph suggest will happen next?

What makes you think this?

- Do you think the choice of setting will influence how the plot develops?

• Do you think... will happen? Explain your answer using evidence from the text.

- Which stories have openings like this? Do you think this story will develop in the same way?

- Why did the author choose this setting? Will that influence how the story develops?
- How is character like someone you know? Do you think they will react in the same way?

2f: Explaining- identify / explain how information / narrative content is related and contributes to meaning as a whole

Explain why a character did something.

Explain a character's different feelings in a story. How do you know?

What is similar/different about two characters?

Why is important in the story?

Why do you think the author chose to use a...a specific layout to present the information?

How does the title/layout encourage you to read on/find information?

Why has the writer written the text in this way?

Who do you think this information is for?

Draw lines to match each part of the story with the correct quotation from the text.

Why is the text arranged in this way?

What structures has the author used?

What is the author's point of view?

What affect does have on the audience?

What are the clues that a character is liked or disliked etc?What is the purpose of this text feature?

2g: Explaining- Identify/explain how meaning is enhanced through choice of words and phrases

What does the word tell you about

What does this... word/sentence... tell you about...

the character?

Highlight a line or word that has effect has the author created?

What other words/phrases could the author have used?

The writer uses ...words/phrases...to describe ... How does this make you feel?

How has the writer made you feel?

What do you think the writer meant by...?

Which words do you think are most important and why?

The mood of the character changes during the text.

Find and copy the words which show this.

The writer uses words like ... What does this tell you about a character or setting?

2h: Comparisons -

How do different characters feel in the story?

How is it similar to ...?

How is it different to ...?

Which other author writes in a similar way

How does the character compare to another character in a different book?

Which is better and why?

Compare and contrast different characters

What do you think about the way information is organised in different parts of the text?