



Helping your child to read.



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Warning !!!

Learning to read, like learning to walk or talk, seems to make parents tense, anxious and determined to compare *their* child favourably with yours. So, there are some key facts you should know from the off...

- There's learning to love books and there's learning to read books. If you can get the first one sorted, the second will follow much more easily.
- There are many different methods for teaching a child to read. Talk to the class teacher if you are unsure of what our school does.
- Reading readiness varies enormously from child to child. Some children can read fluently before they even start school; others take much longer. But, by and large, they all get there in the end and, a couple of years down the line, you'd be hard pressed to tell which children in any group were the early readers.
- Content is everything. Many a child is put off reading by content that is boring or inappropriate.



Reading starts with you

It is important to read to your child. Choose a time of day when you can enjoy a few minutes of undisturbed time together; bedtime often works well for this, make it a daily part of your routine. If you are reading to siblings let them take turns in choosing the book. It is never too soon to begin reading to children. Once they start bringing home reading books from school don't stop reading other books. Reading scheme books use limited vocabulary as they aim to teach a few new words in each book and to make the child feel confident they use familiar words for the rest.

Children's literature has a greater source of new and rare words than adults use in every day conversation, so discuss the meanings of words in context of the story. It is vital to expand your child's vocabulary so, later, when your child reads more advanced books they will understand many new words, helping them to read with confidence.

Owning a favourite book can be very special and sometimes children want to have the same story read to them time and again. They are often able to join in which is a great opportunity to show them words on the page as you read.



Variety is also good and our local libraries have a great selection of children books. There are many places where you can point out words to make them familiar with the importance and fun of reading; such as signs in the supermarket and labels on food, these are useful because the pictures can often give clues to help.



Baby and toddlers

Make sure at least some of your baby books are accessible, preferably in a toybox with other sources of fun, so your child can look at them whenever the whim strikes. Collect books with textures to touch, feel and crackle or squeakers to press and shiny 'mirrors to stare in and giggle at.

As your child gets older and their understanding grows, you can move on to

slightly more complicated picture books, with a bit more text to read (hurrah!) and even the outline of a little story. Look for simple, colourful illustrations and toddler-friendly subjects - mainly animals, vehicles and toddlers.

Intricate pop-up books are all very lovely but they can easily rip. Wipe-clean board books are the way to go for the little ones.

As they grow, keep a few baby/toddler books around that they can look at independently when in the mood.

Pre-reading skills

First they need to 'get' that books have a front and a back, and that a book progresses page by page. Next is understanding that words on the page are read from left to right, and that the different shapes of the letters inside these words are what helps you figure out what to say as you read the book aloud to them.



Of course, you don't actually need to *teach* them this; they'll understand this if you...

"... keep sharing books with her. Point to the words as you read them, moving your finger along the line. Look at the pictures and try to work out what the story may be about. And during or after reading, talk about what the story was about, what she liked and didn't like and so on. These are all very important pre reading skills." *Hulababy*

Look for books with bright, funny illustrations and clear, uncomplicated text. Stories with strong rhymes are especially good: they help your child absorb the rhythm and structure of sentences and sharpen up the listening skills they'll soon need to pick up on different initial letter sounds. Rhymes also encourage anticipation - a key pre-reading skill; try stopping before you finish the rhyme to see if they can fill it in for you ("Rain, rain, go away. Come again another ??").

Knowing nursery rhymes and traditional stories from any culture help children understand the development of stories. Tell the stories wherever you are; walking down the street or in the car and get them to join in (maybe doing the voice of the wolf huffing and puffing at the three little pigs' houses). Eventually they will be able to retell the stories themselves.

Sounds and letters

If you feel your child is ready, you could also start talking to them about the letter sounds. Find a nice ABC book and look at some of the letters together. Start with the letter their name begins with and take it from there - let your child dictate the pace you go at.

When looking at letters to sound out words we say the *sound* of the letter rather than the letter *name*. So *a* as in *apple* not *ay* and *m* as in *mat* not *em*.

Try to pronounce them as a 'pure' sounds: m not muh, f not fuh, l not luh. This is the way they need to be able to read them.

Once they know some letter sounds well, you can 'spot' the letters when you see them on street signs and food labels, as well as in books ("Look, s for sugar.") You could also think up some other letter-sound games to play together, from good old 'I Spy' to more modern, splashy stuff...

"We 'fish' those foam letters with a small net out of the bath: it's a great game. I put about ten letters in, and say, 'Where is m?' and Ben fishes it out. We also play I Spy and this game where I say, 'This word starts with 'a', and it's a fruit, it's red and crunchy' and he has to guess what it is." *BlueberryPancake*

If your child's still keen for more, you could find some simple letter-sound colouring/puzzle sheets online or have a go at helping them blend letter sounds together to make a simple vowel-consonant word: so, "a" and "t" makes "at" or "o" and "n" makes "on".

"Say 'a' and 't', then say it again, faster and faster, until the sounds run together and the penny, in theory, drops."



Starting school

Once your child starts school, they will be taught not only the basic letter sounds of the alphabet but also the ones made up of more than one letter to make a sound, such as "sh" and "ch" and "ai" and "oi". They will bring reading books home, along with, at some point, a set of words to start to learn by heart.

Your child may take to this like a duck to water or they may need lots of your help and encouragement. It can be hard for those who see their classmates outstrip them fast - especially if there are a few who have come into school already able to read.

The key thing to holding your nerve here is remembering that no two children learn to read at the same speed and pace. Some zoom off from the word go and then slow down; some plod along gradually; some stutter at first and then



speed up - with all sorts of variations in between. And remember, there's no great connection between speed of learning to read and speed of brain cells in general.

"My son's a summer-born and was only just four when he started school. He was definitely slower than most of the others at 'getting' the whole idea of reading. I started to think he was destined to be bottom of the pile for ever - it was quite hard not to get a bit worried about it. Two years on, he's flying through books and, looking at his class as a whole now, you really wouldn't know who was an early reader and who struggled." *JuliaB*

That said, there are, of course, loads of things you can do to help nudge your little bookworm-to-be onto a slighter faster learning-to-read track...

- **Sound the words out.** We start teaching reading through phonics. Phonics is decoding words by sounding out all the different letter sounds they contain. Try to bear this in mind when listening to your child read at home: if they get stuck on the word "dog", for example, say, "Let's sound it out: d-o-g says dog". Later they will use combinations of letters that make a single sound such as 'th' and 'ee' as in th-r-ee.
- **Look at the cover first.** Because, odds on, it'll have a picture on it that sets the scene ("Oh, it's a book about a dog"). And, more than likely, the title will contain the most difficult word in the book ("This book's called *My Dog Wellington*"). Prepped with that information, anyone would find the book easier to read.
- **Give them time to look at the pictures.** Your child has known for ages that there are clues to the story in the pictures. So, let them have a good look at them before they tackle the words for themselves. Often, as the books become more complex, the pictures can give vital information to understand the story fully.



- **Talk about the plot.** (Even when very simple.) Check they are understanding what they're reading, rather than just reading words. Ask them what they think might happen next and, at the end, if they liked it or not - and why.

- **A good guess.** Say the sentence is "I have a flannel to wash my face". And your child reads, "I have a flannel to clean my face". That may be wrong but it's a good guess because your child is clearly thinking about the meaning of the sentence. (And you can just gently say, "Nearly. But does clean begin with 'w'?) A child who guesses "I have a flannel to watch my face" may have followed the

letter-sound clues slightly better but they are not thinking about the meaning at all. Encourage them to have a go using all the clues from the pictures and previous sentences.

- **Self correction.** If they make a mistake and then correct themselves, praise highly as they are listening to themselves reading. This is something we encourage in school.
- **Time it right.** Keep the reading sessions short (ten minutes at most) and don't even think about starting one if they're hungry, tired or upset.
- **Help them learn the key words.** Some words, like "of" and "the" just don't decode with phonics. But they're so common, they just need to be learnt by heart. We often call them tricky words. Help them to recognise them as they cannot be sounded out.
- **Make it fun and keep reading to them.** Choose books about things that'll really catch their interest or make them laugh. Read the school reading book at home but also read a variety of other books, comics, magazines and other reading materials together. Sometimes have them read to you and sometimes you to them. Bedtime reading to them is a wonderful routine to keep up as long as possible, all the way through primary school. Create a love of reading by getting into riddles and rhymes, silly poems and plots. Read them ripping yarns, fevered fantasies and fluffy fairy tales. Fill their imagination with the sort of wonderful stuff that keeps reinforcing the link between reading and pleasure.





Coloured book bands

In school we use coloured bands on the reading scheme books. These are so that we can have a range of books from different publishers at a similar level within one band. The book bands go in the colour order:

Band	Colour	NC Level
1	Pink	W
2	Red	W
3	Yellow	1 (C)
4	Blue	1 (C/B)
5	Green	1 (B)
6	Orange	1 (B/A)
7	Turquoise	1 (A)
8	Purple	2C
9	Gold	2B
10	White	2A
11	Lime	3

Children move through the reading scheme books as they are able to read several books at a particular level fluently. That is when they can pick up an unknown book and read it without having to sound out most of the words. When the child can do this they will usually be put onto the next book band.

At the end of year 2 children are expected to be at the national curriculum level 2B, so we expect most children to be on the gold book band. Children learn to read at different rates but if you have any concerns about your child's reading speak to the class teacher.

Reading Record Book

Your child needs their book bag in school every day. Usually when a child gets a new book the title has been recorded in their reading record book. When you hear them read; write the date, make a short comment if you wish (we find this very helpful) and sign it. If your child reads another book to you and you wish to record it in their record, please do!

School Library

The school has a library and children take home a library book of their own choice.

Local Libraries

It is easy to enrol a child and they can take out several books at a time. You can now renew books online if you need them for longer. If you want more information go to hersdirect.org and look at the 'services' section.

For all enquiries for both libraries, including renewals, please call **0300 123 4049**.

Woodhall library, Cole Green Lane

Opening hours:

Monday:	09.00 - 18.00
Tuesday:	14.00 - 18.00
Wednesday:	closed
Thursday:	14.00 - 18.00
Friday:	09.00 - 18.00
Saturday:	09.00 - 13.00
Sunday:	Closed

Campus West Library, Town Centre, Welwyn Garden City

Opening hours:

Monday:	09.00 - 19.00
Tuesday:	09.00 - 19.00
Wednesday:	09.00 - 19.00
Thursday:	09.00 - 19.00
Friday:	09.00 - 19.00
Saturday:	09.00 - 16.00
Sunday:	13.00 - 17.00