

Tips on Reading with your child!

Reading to young children is an important way to help them build language skills. It exposes them to new words and ways of using language. It also helps them learn general information about the world, which makes it easier for them to learn about new subjects once they get to school.

Books also help children build empathy and learn how to handle challenging feelings. You could even use reading time as a chance to talk about emotions and how to cope with them. For example, you might say: “Have you ever felt as angry as the girl in this book? What would you do if you did?”

There’s no one right way to read to your child. You can read to them in any language, or multiple languages. You can do it at the same time every day or change up the routine. The important thing is for your child to hear words and language and to have books be part of their daily life. Any steps you’re able to take can make a big difference.

Giving a child time and full attention when reading them a story tells them they matter. It builds self-esteem, vocabulary, feeds imagination and can even improve their sleeping patterns, according to scientific research evidence.

Below are some tips for when Reading with a child as they move through primary school.

Sharing a book with a child

Make sure your child has a comfortable, quiet place to sit. Distractions such as TV can make it difficult for children to concentrate. Give the book to your child for five minutes so they can look at it alone. This allows the child to investigate and explore the text and pictures independently before starting to read. Read the title together and ask them to tell you about the story and any questions they may have before beginning. Remember talking about books is as important as reading them. Children need to have enthusiasm for texts so allow them to choose their own from the library as well as their school reading books.

Reading aloud

It is important that children, particularly in the Early Years and Infant School, are given the opportunity to read aloud to an adult as often as possible. It improves

their decoding and listening skills. Help your child to sound out and blend any unfamiliar words. If they are still unsure, tell them the word and explain what it means. Then read the sentence again together. Remember to use praise a lot and tell them why they have done well i.e. “I really enjoyed listening to that sentence because you made it sound so exciting!”

Reading with older children

Older children may feel that they enjoy reading on their own more and prefer to read in their head instead of aloud to an adult. This is usually evidence that they are enjoying the reading experience and are skilled and independent enough to read alone. The focus for a parent at this point should be more on discussion of comprehension and fostering an environment where sharing reading experiences and opinions about books is valued at home.

Comprehension

One of the most important parts of reading is comprehension. If a child decodes fluently, but does not fully understand the story or text, then they struggle to enjoy or appreciate books. It is therefore essential that children have opportunity to discuss what they are reading.

One of the more crucial parts of reading is being able to conclude and infer ideas. Open ended questioning such as; ‘why do you think that happened?’ or ‘what makes you think that?’ will help with this. Asking children to tell you why or show you clues in the text/pictures can improve their inference skills dramatically. We enclose a list of potential questions that could be used in a discussion with a child about a book. This is not an exhaustive list but should hopefully give some starting points for discussion that will help children to unpick and fully understand what they are reading.

Sample questions that you could use for book talk:

- Why did you choose this book? What attracted you to it?
- Did you know anything about this book before you started reading it? What do you think about it now you have read some? Is it how you imagined it would be? Why/why not?
- Could you tell me what’s happened so far (fiction) or what this book is about (non-fiction)?
- What has been the most exciting part? Why?

- What could you do if you can't read a word? What could you do if you can read a word but don't know what it means?
- Have you come across this word before?
- How did you know how to say it? Are there any clues in the word? Does it look like other words you know?
- Can you work out what that word means? How can you use the rest of the sentence, page or pictures to help you?
- What other word could the author have used that means the same sort of thing?
- Can you tell me what has happened in this chapter/on this page?
- Why do you think X (a character) did that?
- How could we describe that character? What are they like? How do we know that from what they say and do?
- How you think x (a character) is feeling at the moment? Show me which words/phrases tell us that.
- Why you think Y (an event) happened?
- What do you think will happen next? What makes you think that?
- How you think the author wants us to feel at this moment? How are they trying to do that? What is he/she trying to do here?
- What do you think the purpose of using ____ (word or phrase) is in this paragraph?
- Why did the author choose that title?
- What is the effect of writing in the past/present tense?
- What do you notice about the way this page is set out? How does that help us to understand better?
- Have you read any other books/poems by this author? Did you like them as much? Why/Why not?
- Have you read any similar books by other authors? Which ones?
- How were the books similar?
- What sorts of books do you enjoy most/least? Why?
- Who is your favourite author? Why do you like his/her books? What would you say to recommend them to other people?
- Do you enjoy reading? What would help you to enjoy it more?
- What kinds of books would you like to read more of?