

# The Importance of Reading

## Information for Parents/Carers



There are many reasons why reading with your baby/child is vitally important...

1. A stronger relationship with you
2. A broader vocabulary
3. Academic excellence
4. Increased general knowledge
5. A wider awareness of other times and cultures
6. Good speech and language skills
7. Improved grammar and spellings
8. New experiences and better imagination
9. Improved written work
10. Improved concentration
11. An appreciation for books and the importance of learning
12. Better performance in reading tests

As parents you are your child's most influential teacher with an important part to play in helping your child to learn to read.

**Research shows that reading to a young child is the single most important thing you can do to help your child's education.**

The following pages offer suggestions on how you can help to make reading a positive experience.

## Choose a quiet time

Set aside a quiet time with no distractions. Ten to fifteen minutes is usually long enough.

*"I knew I had my priorities wrong when my 9 year son told me that I loved my mobile more than reading books with him! I now turn it off or leave it in another room when I am reading with him so he knows he has my undivided attention."* [www.springboard.org.uk/parents](http://www.springboard.org.uk/parents)



## Make reading enjoyable

Make reading an enjoyable experience. Sit with your child. Try not to pressurise if he or she is reluctant. If your child loses interest then do something else.

## Maintain the flow

If your child mispronounces a word do not interrupt immediately. Instead allow opportunity for self-correction. It is better to tell a child some unknown words to maintain the flow rather than insisting on them trying to read them all. Likewise, don't do it all for them!

If your child does try to 'sound out' words, encourage the use of letter sounds (phonics) rather than 'alphabet names'. Suggest they break words up, look for words within words, take clues from the pictures or the rest of the sentence - what would make sense there? Perhaps take turns to read a page each to build their stamina. Attend Phonics workshops that school offers so you know how best to support your child.

## Be positive

As your child begins to grow in confidence in reading they're still bound to make mistakes. Get into the habit of praising them for all the words they get right - not just focussing on the ones they are struggling with. At the same time, try to recognise any patterns in the ones they do get wrong and think about the best way to correct mistakes.

*Why not try:*

- Praising them for the words they get right - it really works wonders!
- Looking out for things which will motivate your child to read - instructions on how to enter a competition or how to make a model, or scanning a TV listing to discover when a favourite show is on.
- Making a mental note of any words that your child repeatedly struggles with and spending a few minutes at the start of every reading time trying them out.



## Success is the key

Parents anxious for a child to progress can mistakenly give a child a book that is too difficult. This can have the opposite effect to the one they are wanting. Until your child has built up his or her confidence, it is better to keep to easier books. Struggling with a book with many unknown words is pointless. Flow is lost, text cannot be understood and children can easily become reluctant readers.



## Visit the Library

Encourage your child to use the public library regularly. School primarily provides banded books which focus on learning *how* to read but these need to be supplemented by other books in a different format - books that look different and appealing to read...Books that children don't necessarily associate with school/learning.



## Regular practice

Try to read with your child on most school days. 'Little and often' is best. Teachers have limited time to help your child with reading.

Creating a regular 'special time' to read together can help younger children see the magical world that can be unlocked by the opening of a book, comic or magazine and learn to love the time when they have your undivided attention.

### *Why not try:*

- Building a regular story time into your child's bedtime routine.
- Switching off the TV and your mobile to read with them. Resist the urge to tidy their room or do the washing up and give them your time to sit and read together.
- Telling them about a book or story you liked when you were a child. You may still be able to find a copy of it on the Internet!
- Making up a story or telling them about when you were a child or something that happened to you at school - remember you don't always need a book to tell a good story.

*"Children are growing up in an ever-changing world so consistent routines and patterns can help them feel secure and cared for." [www.springboard.org.uk/parents](http://www.springboard.org.uk/parents)*

## Talk about the books

There is more to being a good reader than just being able to read the words accurately. Just as important is being able to understand what has been read. Always talk to your child about the book; about the pictures, the characters, how they think the story will end, their favourite part. You will then be able to see how well they have understood and you will help them to develop good comprehension skills.

## Variety is important

Remember children need to experience a variety of reading materials eg. picture books, hard backs, comics, magazines, poems, and information books. It doesn't always have to be a book.

Every day there are lots of opportunities for you to encourage your child to get reading.

### *Why not try:*

- Going online together and reading or printing off a web page that interests them.
- Carrying a book or comic in your bag to share when you are out and about, on the bus, train, etc.
- Encouraging them to read traffic signs, adverts, cereal packets, simple news headlines, DVD covers or film reviews.

*"My brother sometimes read me The Beano comic if I asked nicely. Usually not. I got so fed up with this I learnt to read. If you read fun books to your children, they'll feel compelled to read simply so they won't be reliant, like I was on my brother. Remember some books teach you things - that's a bonus. But ALL books - including The Beano - teach you to read."*

Nicholas Allan, BAFTA Award-winning writer and illustrator of children's books.



## Communicate

Your child has a reading record/message book. Try to communicate regularly with positive comments and any concerns. Your child will then know that you are interested in their progress and that you value reading.

If you feel your child is struggling with their reading book, talk to their teacher. We want to work as a team.

