

Reading stories to children at home

Introduction

Your child will bring home two books. One is for your child to read to you. It has been carefully chosen so that they can work out all the words. The other book has words your child may not be able to read yet. It is for you to read to your child and talk about together.

How to read a story to your child

If you can find the time beforehand, read the read-aloud book to yourself first, so you can think about how you're going to read it to your child.

On the first reading:

- Make reading aloud feel like a treat. Make it a special quiet time and cuddle up so you can both see the book.
- Show curiosity about what you're going to read: 'This book looks interesting. It's about an angry child. I wonder how angry he gets...'
- Read through the whole story the first time without stopping too much. Let the story weave its own magic.
- Read with enjoyment. If you're not enjoying it, your child won't.

Read favourite stories over and over again. On later readings:

- Let your child pause, think about and comment on the pictures.
- If you think your child did not understand something, try to explain: 'Oh! I think what's happening here is that...'
- Chat about the story and pictures: 'I wonder why she did that?'; 'Oh no, I hope she's not going to...'; 'I wouldn't have done that, would you?'
- Link the stories to your own family experiences: 'This reminds me of when ...'
- Link stories to others that your child knows: 'Ah! Do you remember the dragon in? Do you remember what happened to him?'
- Encourage your child to join in with the bits they know.
- Avoid asking questions to test what your child remembers.
- Avoid telling children that reading stories is good for them.

Helping your child with Reading at home

Research proves that children who enjoy reading do better at school in all subjects. Reading together increases literacy skills and does so much more - it helps to build a strong and loving relationship with your child. And it's never too early to start reading with your child!

Set aside some time

Find somewhere quiet without any distractions - turn off the TV / radio / computer.

Ask your child to choose a book

Sharing books they have chosen shows you care what they think and that their opinion matters and they are more likely to engage with the book.

Sit close together

Encourage your child to hold the book themselves and/or turn the pages.

Point to the pictures

If there are illustrations, relate them to something your child knows. Ask them to describe the characters or situation or what will happen next. Encourage them to tell you the story by looking at the pictures.

Encourage your child to talk about the book

Talking about the characters and their dilemmas helps children understand relationships and is an excellent way for you to get to know each other or discuss difficult issues. Give your child plenty of time to respond. Ask them what will happen next, how a character might be feeling or how the book makes them feel.

And lastly, above all - make it fun!

It doesn't matter how you read with a child, as long as you both enjoy the time together. Don't be afraid to use funny voices - children love this!

Questions to ask your child when reading

Before reading the book:

Can you point to the title? or What is this? (pointing to the title)

What do you think this story will be about?

What might happen in the story?

What do you call the writing on the back of the book? (blurb) or What does the blurb tell us?

During the reading of the book:

What is happening in the pictures?

What has happened so far?

Is it what you expected to happen?

What might happen next?

How do you think the story might end?

What sort of character is...? Is s/he friendly, kind, happy, mean...?

At the end of the book:

Did you like the book? Why? (Encourage children to develop their opinion about books by encouraging them to explain their reasons.)

What was the most interesting/ exciting part of the book? Can you find it?

What sort of character was...?

Why did that character do...? (give a situation/ event from the story)

What happened in the story?

What was your favourite part? Why?

Please remember to record what you have read and discussed in your child's reading log.

Ten top tips for encouraging your child to read

1. Encourage your child to read

Reading helps your child's wellbeing, develops imagination and has educational benefits too. Just a few minutes a day can have a big impact on children of all ages.

2. Read aloud regularly

Try to read to your child every day. It's a special time to snuggle up and enjoy a story. Stories matter and children love re-reading them and poring over the pictures. Try adding funny voices to bring characters to life.

3. Encourage reading choice

Give children lots of opportunities to read different things in their own time - it doesn't just have to be books. There's fiction, non-fiction, poetry, comics, magazines, recipes and much more. Try leaving interesting reading material in different places around the home and see who picks it up.

4. Read together

Choose a favourite time to read together as a family and enjoy it. This might be everyone reading the same book together, reading different things at the same time, or getting your children to read to each other. This time spent reading together can be relaxing for all.

5. Create a comfortable environment

Make a calm, comfortable place for your family to relax and read independently - or together.

6. Make use of your local library

Libraries in England are able to open from 4 July, so visit them when you're able to and explore all sorts of reading ideas. Local libraries also offer brilliant online materials, including audiobooks and ebooks to borrow. See [Libraries Connected](#) for more digital library services and resources.

7. Talk about books

This is a great way to make connections, develop understanding and make reading even more enjoyable. Start by discussing the front cover and talking about what it reveals and suggests the book could be about. Then talk about what you've been reading and share ideas. You could discuss something that happened that surprised you, or something new that you found out. You could talk about how the book makes you feel and whether it reminds you of anything.

8. Bring reading to life

You could try cooking a recipe you've read together. Would you recommend it to a friend? Alternatively, play a game where you pretend to be the characters in a book, or discuss an interesting article you've read.

9. Make reading active

Play games that involve making connections between pictures, objects and words, such as reading about an object and finding similar things in your home. You could organise treasure hunts related to what you're reading. Try creating your child's very own book by using photos from your day and adding captions.

10. Engage your child in reading in a way that suits them

You know your child best and you'll know the best times for your child to read. If they have special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) then short, creative activities may be the way to get them most interested. If English is an additional language, encourage reading in a child's first language, as well as in English. What matters most is that they enjoy it.