

Early and developing readers: guidance for parents

Schools and nurseries usually provide guidance for parents, giving clear advice about a range of ways in which you can support your children with their reading. This is the best place for you to start.

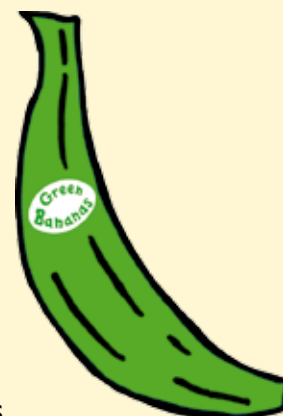
The Demands of Reading

Books for younger children support reading in a variety of ways. Knowing the kinds of support that different books provide will help you think about the kinds of help you may need to offer your child as they begin to widen their reading experience.

Books may support children by:

- Using pictures to tell the story
- Using pictures to develop deeper ideas than those in the written text
- Having a 'tune' or pattern
- Having a simplified text with a limited vocabulary
- Being part of a series with the same characters and settings

If books do not do these things, children may need help finding out how the book works. Young readers used to one type of book may need explicit guidance in recognising that different books work in different ways.



Selecting Books

Learning about your own likes and dislikes is an important part of becoming a reader. You can help your child to choose by:

- Allowing plenty of time for browsing in libraries and bookshops. Support your child by talking about authors, illustrators, reading the blurb, reading the opening pages to them or encouraging them to read a little bit for themselves.
- Finding out about authors and series of books which might be suitable for the age group:
 - ◇ **Write Away** www.writeaway.co.uk reviews books for children written by education experts and practitioners and is easy to search under different age groups.
 - ◇ **Love Reading** www.lovereadingschools.co.uk Booklists for parents
 - ◇ **ReadingZone** www.readingzone.com for book recommendations and children's book news
 - ◇ **Booktrust** www.booktrusted.co.uk for book recommendations and author information
- Being patient! Remember that this process of choosing is important and much harder for early readers.

Supporting Reading

Try to keep the special reading times which you had before your child could read. Find a quiet time and place to cuddle up and share the book. Take time to talk about the book and be involved in the story, rather than listening to check that your child is 'reading properly'.

Sometimes children can flounder without the comfortable familiarity of a book they recognise, whether a reading scheme or series. You can help your child by taking time to help them familiarise themselves with the book before they begin to read. You can do this by:



- Reading the blurb together on the back of the book and talking about what it tells you about the kind of story/ the characters / the kinds of things which might happen. Talk about the questions it raises and the things we want to find out. This will help your child to want to read the story.

- Looking at the front cover and the illustrations may also give clues about the type of story (e.g. humour, mystery, family etc).

- Talking about the author and illustrator and about books which you may have read together by the same author.

- Looking through the book and talking about what is happening in the pictures to establish some ideas about story, setting and characters.

Your child may be desperate to read independently but may still need your support both to read the words and to understand the story. This needs to be done tactfully by varying the support you offer the child with different kinds of texts. This might mean:

- Sharing the reading page by page

- Limiting the challenge by dividing up longer books, setting a goal, e.g. one chapter, before beginning reading

- Reading the story first to your child if it is particularly challenging.

- Encouraging your child to take time to look at the pictures, read any other print on the page such as speech bubbles, and talk about the story.

- Encouraging your child to enjoy re-reading the story, perhaps in different ways, sharing the reading with you or reading it to someone else.



School guidance will provide clear details of reading strategies taught and practised at school. Early readers may need help in using a wide range of strategies and you may need to help your child choose the most appropriate strategy for them. You might need to remind them how to:

- Say the individual sounds which make up a word and synthesise (blend) them to make the whole word

- Look for small known words inside big words

- Miss out the word and read ahead to the end of the sentence and go back to find a word which will make sense and match the look of the word

- Look at the picture to see if there is a clue

- Think about what's happening in the story and see if that helps

Remember, having spent time working out a tricky word, encourage your child to re-run the sentence so that the meaning and enjoyment of the whole story is not lost.



After Reading

Remember that a story does not stop when the last page is read. Help your child to enjoy the whole experience of reading by:

- Spending time talking together about the book and sharing ideas and opinions
- Re-reading the story or parts of it
- Looking again at the pictures
- Following up ideas from the story in real life. This could be all sorts of things, from play activities, to visits, to reading other books about similar topics or by the same authors.

Developing Confident, Enthusiastic and Independent Readers

As children become increasingly independent they will need you to support their reading in different ways:

- Continue to take an interest; you may need to do this subtly
- Trust your child to make their own reading choices, even if you feel that their choices are not 'worthy' or insufficiently demanding. Remember that children, like adults have their own reading preferences. They may prefer to read comics, magazines, fiction, non-fiction or choose your own adventure type stories.
- Boys and Girls may have different reading preferences but it is important not to stereotype their reading. These days it is easy to find books that have been produced with specific girl or boy appeal. Be sensitive to their preferences without pigeon-holing their reading.
- Look for books related to children's hobbies, current films and playground trends.
- Be sensitive to the demands of reading. A page of close text may be off putting for readers who have developed reading skills but do not yet have the stamina to tackle long books with dense print. Series like *Zac Power* have been thoughtfully designed to be easy on the eye and non-threatening. Further information about finding 'winning books' is available on the Power of reading website www.powerofreading.com.au
- Reading books in a series can be very important for children's reading development. Try not to be anxious if you child wants to read all 13 books in *A Series of Unfortunate Events* but appears not to be reading anything else. Reading a familiar form can increase confidence and provides essential reading practice. Children who are allowed to indulge in such pleasurable reading are more likely to become 'hooked on books' and to broaden their reading interests later.
- Take account of your child's interests and preferences when making suggestions but also encourage them to try new things. If your child is an avid series reader, you can help broaden their reading experience by:
 - ◇ Continuing to read aloud to them throughout the primary years. Many children continue to enjoy this experience.
 - ◇ If your child is resistant and associates this with younger readers, buy or borrow audiobooks. Play them during car journeys



◇ Take part in the Telegraph Family Book Club: <http://tinyurl.com/2s6au6>

◇ Talk about your own reading interests. It's important that children see that you enjoy reading too.



- Encourage your child to find their own reading communities using the local library or the internet:

- Stories from the Web: www.storiesfromtheweb.org

- Cool Reads: www.cool-reads.co.uk

- Reluctance to read has many causes, many of which can be avoided by taking account of this advice. However, if your child is reluctant to read because they find reading difficult you may need resources that are specifically produced to help them. Barrington Stoke publishes books especially for children who find reading difficult. www.barringtonstoke.co.uk

Further Reading

Paul Jennings (2004) *The Reading Bug... And how you can help your child catch it*
Puffin

Nicholas Tucker (2002) *The Rough Guide to Children's Books 0 – 5 Years*
Rough Guides

Nicholas Tucker (2002) *The Rough Guide to Children's Books 5 – 11 Years*
Rough Guides

Danile Hahn et al (2004) *The Ultimate Book Guide*
A & C Black

Jacqueline Wilson (2006) *Great Books to Read Aloud*
Corgi, Random House

The National Literacy Trust offers advice for parents and families:
www.literacytrust.org.uk/database/parentindex.html

