

KS1 Parent's Guide To Reading

Everyone needs to be able to read and an early start is very important. This does not mean drilling your child or forcing them to 'read' before they are ready, but rather providing them with the activities they need to develop the skills for reading, so that when they are ready, they will learn quickly and confidently.

A Few Basics

- Always give your child lots of praise and encouragement.
- You don't have to spend a long time over reading or writing. Regular short sessions of five or ten minutes are often better, especially if these can be made part of a daily routine your child can look forward to, such as practising writing letters before dinner and reading a story at bedtime.
- Use rhymes, poems and songs that your child can learn by heart. These are very important in the early stages of reading and continue to be valuable even in KS2 and beyond.
- Read to your child and get your child to track the words that you are reading with their finger or bookmark.
- Ask friends and relatives to help but make sure that you are all taking the same approach. Consistency is very important.
- Try to have a variety of literature around the house e.g. magazines, comics, books, newspapers, catalogues, poetry.
- Set a good example yourself. If your child sees you reading a book or a newspaper they will want to read too. Introduce family reading time if possible.
- Point out words written on signs, household objects and food packets. Even before they can read, children can take pleasure in telling you what a word in a familiar location says e.g. 'Tesco', 'Sainsburys', 'Torridon', 'Weetabix'.
- Treat books as something special. Encourage your child to look after them.

Books can be expensive so join your local library. They are an excellent source of good children's books and most run storytelling, puppet making and drama workshops at weekends and in the holidays.

Sharing Books

The most important thing is that children enjoy reading so offer lots of encouragement and praise.

Talk about the story and the pictures as you go along.

Encourage them to join in, take turns to read a page each or get them to tell you the story in their own words.

Having your attention for ten minutes while you share a book may be the most important part of the day for your child so it is important to continue sharing books even when your child can read independently.

How to be a successful reader

To be a good reader we need to be able to do two things:

1. Understand what the words mean (comprehension).
2. Work out what the written word says (decoding or sounding out words).

Both aspects of successful reading are covered on the next few pages. We will start with comprehension because this comes first in a child's life, through listening.

Successful Comprehension: understanding the meaning of words

Every time you talk to your child or tell them stories you are helping to develop their vocabulary, imagination and their understanding of the world. Children who have had stories read or told to them regularly also become better writers. Try to read as often as you can during the day. Even when your child begins to read confidently alone you still need to read to them in order to continue to develop their vocabulary and comprehension.

National expectations for each year

The following are the national expectations listed in the primary strategy for each year group. However, they are only guidelines and it is important to remember that every child progresses at their own rate.

By the end of Reception children should:

Know that print carries meaning and, in English, is read from left to right and top to bottom.	Extend their vocabulary, exploring the meaning and sounds of new words.
Show an understanding of the elements of stories, such as main character, sequence of events, and openings, and how information can be found in non-fiction texts to answer questions.	Listen with enjoyment to stories, songs, rhymes and poems, sustain attentive listening and respond with relevant comments, questions and actions.

Retell narratives in the correct sequence, drawing on the language patterns of stories.	Use language to imagine and recreate roles and experiences.
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By the end of Year 1 children should:

Identify the main events and characters in stories, and find specific information in simple texts.	Explore the effect of patterns of language and repeated words and phrases.
Distinguish fiction and non-fiction texts and the different purposes for reading them.	Visualise and comment on events, characters and ideas, making imaginative links to their own experiences.
Make predictions showing an understanding of ideas, events and characters	Use syntax and context when reading for meaning
Recognise the main elements that shape different texts.	Select books for personal reading and give reasons for choices.

By the end of Year 2 children should:

Draw together ideas and information from across a whole text, using simple signposts in the text.	Explain organisational features of texts, including alphabetical order, layout, diagrams, captions, hyperlinks and bullet points.
Give some reasons why things happen or characters change.	Explore how particular words are used, including words and expressions with similar meanings.
Use syntax and context to build their store of vocabulary when reading for meaning	Read whole books on their own, choosing and justifying selections.
Engage with books through exploring and enacting interpretations.	Explain their reactions to texts, commenting on important aspects.

Here are some suggestions for developing these skills.

Picture Books

Your child will bring home many picture books from school. These are valuable and enjoyable stories for you to share with your child from Nursery through to Year 2 and even into Key Stage 2. First look at the front cover with your child. Talk about the picture. What can they see? Who do they think the story is about? Is there a clue in the title? Ask your child what they think might happen on the next page so that they make predictions showing an understanding of ideas, events and characters. You have a guess too. Read on and see who was right. Ask the same kind of questions all the way through to help your child understand and interpret the text. As you chat about the story your child will be learning to visualise and comment on events, characters and ideas. At the end of the story you can discuss how the characters behaved. Ask questions like 'How do you think they feel?' 'Was that a good thing to do?' 'Has that ever happened to you?' 'Do you know anyone like that?' 'If you wrote to the zoo what would you ask for?' This will help your child to make imaginative links to their own experience and give some reasons why things happen or characters change.

Traditional Stories

There are many lovely picture books and new stories published every year for you to enjoy with your children but it is still important to tell and read traditional stories like The Three Little Pigs, Little Red Riding Hood and Anansi the Spider. These stories have a particular structure and patterned language which makes them very easy and enjoyable to tell and to join in with. During their infant experience your child will learn to tell from memory several traditional tales such as The Little Red Hen, The Enormous Watermelon and The Papaya That Spoke, enabling them to retell stories, ordering events using story language e.g. 'Once upon a time, 'trip trap, trip, trap over the bridge'.

Traditional tales are also very useful for children who are learning English as an additional language. Retelling these stories in their first language will help them to develop their thinking skills as well as their feeling for story structure and patterned language.

Nursery Rhymes, Rhyming Stories and Songs

Along with traditional tales these are another important resource for helping children to explore the effect of patterns of language and repeated words and phrases.

You might think that these are only for Nursery children or out dated but they are valuable even in Key Stage 2. Rhymes are very important in helping children to recognise patterns in words and sounds. Your child will love guessing the last word in a line as you read with them and they will really enjoy making up their own rhymes and silly sentences. From Reception to Year 2 children are expected to extend their vocabulary, exploring the meaning and sounds of new words and to explore how particular words are used, including words and expressions with similar meanings. Nursery Rhymes contain a wealth of historical words e.g. cobbler, sixpence, posies, and there are many references to Nursery Rhymes in classic books e.g. Mary Mary Quite Contrary in 'The Secret Garden'. When your child meets these in history topics or in their reading they are much more likely to remember the words and understand their meaning.

Learning stories, rhymes, poems and songs by heart develops memory and concentration skills and they can easily be learnt in odd moments, walking to school, waiting for the bus or stuck in a traffic jam. Teachers frequently use songs and rhymes to help children learn number facts or other information.

Poems

As well as rhymes your child will also enjoy reading a selection of other poems. In school your child will also experience poems with a strong rhythm or patterned structure, funny poems and poems on a theme.

Information Books

Most children enjoy story books but some prefer to read non fiction and there are now many beautifully illustrated information books available for Reception and Key Stage 1 readers. It is important for all children to be able to read and use information texts. By the end of Year 2 they are expected to draw together ideas and information from across a whole text, using simple signposts in the text and to explain organisational features of texts, including alphabetical order, layout, diagrams, captions, hyperlinks and bullet points. Encourage your child to find books about the things that they are interested in, such as dinosaurs or pets. Look at how the books are set out and help your child to understand how things like headings, sub-headings, contents and index pages help us to find our way around the book. Your child will need to experience a range of information texts including instructions. DIY manuals and cookery books are excellent for this. You can also use the internet. The 'Things To Do' section of the Blue Peter website has lots of ideas.

Successful decoding: working out the sound of words from their letters

Before children can begin to learn to read they need to be able to see the difference between similar letters and hear the difference between similar sounds. Puzzle pads with Spot the Difference, Match the Pairs, Dot to Dots and Find the Odd One Out are fun ways to develop visual skills. These can be found in many newspapers.

When you are out and about ask your child to count all the sounds they can hear. Try to discriminate between similar sounds like a car and a motorbike, a helicopter and an aeroplane. Read stories like Chicken Licken and Henny Penny or 'We're Going on a Bear Hunt' and play around with the words. Invent rhyming names for favourite toys. There are many matching and rhyming games to buy but it's easy to make your own. You could draw pictures, use a digital camera or cut out pictures from catalogues. Make rhyming pairs then spread the pictures out. Hide one card then ask your child to match all the pairs that rhyme. When there is only one left the child guesses the hidden card from its rhyming pair.

Letter Sounds (Phonic Knowledge)

English is a complicated language to learn to read and spell, and research has shown that children learn it best if it is taught using a method called 'phonics', in which children are shown how words break down into letters and sounds. 'Phonics' is a word that lots of parents are now familiar with but many are understandably confused about how it is taught. Two words which are useful to know are:

Phoneme - a sound in a word.

Grapheme - the letter or group of letters which represent a sound.

For example:

dog has three phonemes and three graphemes d- o - g

ship has three phonemes and three graphemes but four letters sh - i - p.

We learn to read 'sh' as a single sound rather than 's' and 'h'.

These words all contain the same phoneme (sound) but they are spelt differently:

came day great pain eight paper

The <a> sound has been represented by six different graphemes.

a-e ay ea ai eigh a

To make English even more confusing some sounds that are very different are written with the same letters. In each of these words the letter 'a' sounds different.

ant apron want father

While your child is in the beginning stages of learning to read it is useful to refer to letters by their sounds rather than their names. Your child will need to know the letter names eventually but these are not necessary for reading and can be confusing.

When you are saying the letter sounds try to say them as clearly as possible without adding any extra vowels. For example, when saying the letters c, t, p, s, it is very easy to add an extra sound at the end of each one, making them sound like cuh, tuh, puh, suh. This makes it difficult to blend sounds together to make words i.e. cuh – a – tuh spells 'cuhatuh' instead of 'cat'.

It is important to be aware of this when you are working on letter sounds with your child.

Activities to help with letter sounds

There are many games which you can play to help your child learn the letter sounds. Here are a few suggestions.

<u>I Spy</u> Take turns to spy an object. Say " I spy with my little eye something beginning with". Remember to use the letter sound and not the name. If it is a word beginning with a two letter sound e.g. church, say the blend not the first letter i.e. ch not c.	<u>Blending and Segmenting</u> Joining sounds together is known as 'blending' e.g. sh – i – p can be joined up (blended) to say 'ship'. Splitting words into separate sounds is known as 'segmenting' e.g. dog can be split up (segmented) into d – o – g.
<u>Text Search</u> Ask your child to search through a page in a book, magazine, comic, or catalogue and find all the words beginning with a particular sound.	<u>Alphabet Cat</u> Take turns going through the alphabet describing a cat e.g. My cat is an angry cat. My cat is a big cat. My cat is a cuddly cat.

These are important skills for both reading and spelling. Throughout their infant experience children will be taught to blend (join) sounds together in order to read words, and to segment (split) words up into sounds in order to spell them.

Activities to help with blending and segmenting words

Think of some simple words. In the early stages you should stick to three letter words e.g. cat, sat, mat, or you might want to use the reading or spelling list sent from school. Say the sounds of the word e.g. h – a – t. Ask your child to say what they think the word is (hat). Now try it the other way round. You say the word (dog) and ask your child to say the sounds (d – o- g).

What's In The Box ?

Choose some objects to put in a box or a bag. Make sure that your child can name all the objects. Ask them to feel one of the objects in the box and get them to guess what it is. Take it out and check. Now ask them to say the sounds in the word. You can write the sounds down or get them to do it.

Rhyming Words

See how many words you can find that rhyme e.g.

cat, fat, mat, hat, rat, sat, bat, that
make, bake, take, shake, brake, lake
look, took, hook, shook, cook, rook

Children are also expected to recognise by sight the most common 'tricky' words which cannot be easily sounded out e.g. said, there, come.

More Ways To Help

Encourage your child to read all kinds of literature, especially books with pictures that help tell the story, and books which repeat the same words.

Help your child to choose appropriate books. Many children choose books that are far too challenging and then become disheartened. Parents often feel that they need to 'push' their children into reading harder books because they will learn more. In fact children learn by reading widely at a level which is comfortable not by painfully struggling through books which are too difficult.

When you start a new book it is a good idea to read it to your child first, and talk about it. Point out names and any unusual words.

Children like to return to the same book over and over again. It may be very boring for you but reading from memory is an important part of learning to read

and rereading a book builds confidence. Each time your child rereads a book you can encourage more discussion of the story or play games with the words. Don't try to stop your child from repeating a book but you could suggest that they choose a book that they think you might enjoy, or encourage them to read to a brother or sister or even a toy.

Children who seem to read well often need you to explain things to them. Talk about the characters in a story and what has happened so far. Ask them what they think will happen next.

You could take turns to pretend to be one of the characters in a story and ask each other questions e.g. you could pretend to be Cinderella or one of the mice turned into a horse. Your child could ask how you felt, were you scared, what was the most exciting part ? etc. Then you could swap.

Remember – it's important to talk to your child about all sorts of things. Get them to be critical about what they watch on television and what they read. Look in libraries and shops for reading games, tapes and videos about stories.

Pairs

Write words on cards to make matching pairs.

The aim is to find the matching words or pictures.

Place the cards face down on the table. Each player turns over two cards at a time. If they don't match they are turned face down again and the next player turns over two cards. The winner is the one who finds the most pairs.

Word search

Make up a word search from a favourite book, things around the house, things you see on holiday, 'tricky' words, topic words.

Lunch Box Notes

If your child has a packed lunch you could put short messages inside their lunchbox for them to read at lunch time.

Words All Around

Encourage your child to read whenever they see writing. As well as picking out words on street signs and the names of shops, they can start to read menus, maps, T.V. guides, instructions, recipes etc.

Play 'How many things can you read on the way to school?'

Story Telling

Try telling stories without a book. You may feel uncertain at first but you will find it easier with practise.

Retell stories that you were familiar with or talk about when you were little.

Your child will enjoy hearing about times when you were naughty or scared.

Try using a puppet or toys to help act out a story.

When They Get Stuck

If your child gets stuck on a word give them time to work it out for themselves and praise them for having a go - even if they get it wrong.

Encourage them to look at the first letter, or the picture for clues. Reading the rest of the sentence can also help.

If they can't get the word tell them what it is – don't let them struggle for so long that they lose interest.

If your child gets stuck so often that it spoils the flow of the story you should read it to them, then talk about it afterwards.

It's a good idea to take turns to read. You could read a page then ask your child to read it back to you, or you could read alternate pages. By doing this you can demonstrate how to read with expression.

Remember - your child will not learn if they are not enjoying it. Keep activities short and enjoyable. If you find that you are getting frustrated, stop and have a break.

What You Might Write To Your Child's Teacher in Reading Records

It can be difficult to know what to write to your child's teacher to tell them how you got on with reading at home. Here are some suggestions:

- We had fun looking at the pictures.
- I read the book and then he read it back to me.
- She managed to point out all the words beginning with s.
- He enjoyed the story and joined in with the rhymes.
- She told me the story in her own words.
- He could use the sounds to work out difficult words.
- She could use the context to guess difficult words.

- He asked questions about the story.
- She talked about her favourite character.