



Top tips for supporting your child with English

As a parent/carer you are the person who knows your child best, so you are ideally placed to help them with reading, writing, speaking and listening.

Everywhere you go there are things to read –whether you are shopping, waiting for a bus, visiting a museum or sitting at the doctors’. There are lots of fun ways to improve reading without children even realising they are learning.

By pointing out words all around you, you will be making them aware of how important reading and literacy are. Reading in any language will help your child do well at school. Let your child see you reading and writing and talk about what you are doing.

Spend 10 minutes a day reading together. Make it fun –choose books you both enjoy.

Top tips for hearing your child read

Use praise every time your child reads, even if they don't get everything right first time.

Remembering 'pause, prompt, praise' helps. Wait before you correct a mistake so that your child has a chance to get it right themselves, then give your child clues to help them get the word right, and finally praise them if they get the word right or even try to.

A word you will hear from school when children are learning to read is 'phonics'. This means the letter and letter sounds rather than the letter names.

Wait until the end of a line before correcting mistakes when you are reading together

This will give time for self correction. If your child doesn't know a word, get them to guess what it means from the other words around, or say 'something' instead and go back later to work out the word.

Spending some time reading together each day can really help your child progress with reading.

Long words can be made easier by clapping out the chunks of the word (syllables). For example, there are two in luck-y and three in an-i-mal.

Some children need lots of practice and others want to read the same book again and again. This is a normal part of learning to read.

Once older children have got the mechanics of reading (the 'how to'), there is a lot parents can do to help children enjoy reading.

It is very important for children to see reading as something they can do in their spare time for fun, as well as a tool they need to help them at school. This is because research shows that children who read for pleasure do better at school.

Read together a book that you know well, and miss out words. Encourage your child to fill in the blanks with a word of their own. This will help you see how much they understand.

All children learn differently. Some children need to slow down when they read, as they may be good at spotting the first letter of words and then guessing what the word says. Others need to worry less about mistakes and read all the way through the story.

If your child gets stuck, encourage them to sound out the word and use clues in the story to help them guess what the word is.

Pictures can help give clues to words as well. Part of learning to be a better reader is being able to guess what new words mean and how they sound.

Discuss the pictures, words and what has happened in the story. Predict what might happen next and talk about the setting and the characters.

Read non-fiction together and talk about what new information has been found out. Get your child to find facts and do lots of talking about the information being read.

Reading Ideas

Join the local library. It costs nothing to join and books can be borrowed for free. There are lots of events going on in libraries that you can go to, and libraries can give your child the chance to choose from hundreds of books.

Talk about the pictures and characters together.

Look at newspapers together and point out more unusual words

Make a word box and put in new words your child has learnt.

Encourage your child to read the words on food packets when you are unpacking shopping or cooking.

Label familiar objects around the house with post-it notes or signs.

Have a longer reading session together. Get your child to choose a selection of their favourite things to read.

Get your child to read to younger brothers and sisters. This will make them feel like the 'expert' and encourage your younger children to read as well.

Get your child to retell a favourite picture book in their own words.

Let your child choose books that they want to read. Find books about things you know your child likes – for example, dinosaurs, space or TV programmes.

Get your child to work out which bus to take by reading the place names on the front.

Use pop-up or lift-the-flap books to get even reluctant readers interested. They are great fun and can be borrowed from the library for free.

Suggestions for older children:

Don't forget that older children enjoy being read to. You could also read your own childhood favourites together.

Take books when you go on a journey or shopping trip to help pass the time.

Read a match report for your team together.

Get your child to keep a record of the books they have read, perhaps giving each book a start rating or drawing a picture or writing something about the books that will remind them of it in the future.

Share audio versions of books that may be too difficult for them to read alone.

Encourage children to read magazines, comics, newspapers and non-fiction (fact) books. Research shows that as long as children choose to read for pleasure their education benefits.

Tips for helping children write.

When children are beginning to write encourage them to hold the pencil correctly as bad habits formed early on are hard to undo.

It is important for children to practise making the letter shapes. When children know the letter shapes it is important to encourage them to write the letters clearly.

Play categories. Write lists of different groups of things, for example, cartoon characters.

Make a pop-up lift-the-flap book together.

Help your child write a letter or email to a friend or relative.

Play join the dots with very small children-dot out the shapes of letters or draw letters in pencil and encourage your child to go over them in pen.

Leave messages for each other on the fridge using alphabet fridge magnets.

Get your child to write your lists for you-for example, shopping list or 'do it' lists. They can also write lists for themselves, for example their favourite things, music, books or people.

Set up a 'writing wall' in your house. Stick a large piece of paper on a wall or door and encourage the whole family to add jokes, poems, slogans, questions and pictures.

Encourage your child to keep a scrap book of what they do when they are on holiday – whether you go away or not.

They could stick in things they have found, bus tickets or entrance tickets to places they visit or interesting things from magazines. You could encourage them to write about interesting things that happen to them.

Play game with word lists. You could ask your child to put a list in alphabetical order. Try this with ice-cream flavours, football teams or makes of cars.

Play word finding games with old magazines and newspapers. You could get your child to draw a circle round every word that ends with -ing or every word beginning with the first letter of their name.

The games can get harder as your child becomes more confident. With older children you could ask them to find words that have similar spelling patterns or particular types of words such as adjectives.

Get your child to rearrange the letters in their name or other words they know to make new words (anagrams). For example, the letters in Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire can be rearranged to say 'portray battle of frightened hero'.

Buy a book of junior crosswords to help develop the number or words your child knows (their vocabulary)

The most common way of learning spellings is look, say, cover, write, check. This means that you look at the word and spell it aloud. When you think you know it, cover the word up and write it down without looking. Then check it to see if you have got it right. If you have, move on to the next word and if you haven't, try again.

Spelling in English is difficult as many words sound the same but look different (for example, where and wear). Some children will need lots of help and encouragement to learn spellings. They will need to practise using words in writing so encourage them to try and use a new word in something they write by making it seem like a challenge.

If your child is finding a word difficult to learn, you could make it your word of the day.

Stick key words around the house to help children remember them or send them on a key word hunt.

You can make up songs to help remember difficult words or create rhymes such as '**B**ig **E**lephants **C**an't **A**lways **U**se **S**mall **E**xits' = BECAUSE

Encourage children to find out the meanings and origins of words to help them understand how to use them and remember how to spell them.

Speaking and Listening

It is really important to provide children with the opportunity to speak about as many different things and to listen to lots of different things.

Get children to talk about their day at school.

Encourage them to ask questions about everything.

Get them to discuss opinions, issues and views about articles, stories, films and things they have seen or read.

Provide opportunities for them to listen in different ways, to different people, radio, internet, music, podcasts and TV.