

Reading Tips for Home

Learning to read is a very complex task. Each child learns at his/her own pace, but there are many things that parents and caregivers can do to help them become literate. Here are some ideas for you to use as you work with your child. I hope that you find them useful.

1. Echo & Choral Reading

Echo Reading:

This is a great way to help a child develop confidence and fluency. Read aloud a line of text. Ask the child to read the same line. Continue taking turns reading and rereading the same lines. When the child begins to read with more expression and fluency, suggest that he read aloud on his own.

Choral Reading:

This strategy helps children become more fluent and confident readers. Hold the book together and ask the child to read along with you. Begin reading in a voice that is slightly louder and faster than the child's. As the child becomes more comfortable with reading the text, lower your voice and slow down your reading speed. If the child slows down, increase your volume and speed again.

Paired Reading

1. Sit side-by-side with your child and position the book in between the two of you.
2. If your child has chosen a book that they have previously been reading, ask them to retell what they remember.
3. Begin by reading out loud together. Have your child point to each word with their finger as you both read.
4. Adjust your intonation and rate to your child's level. Read with an expressive voice that is slightly faster than your child would read independently.
5. If they make an error (or hesitate for a few seconds on a word), wait to see if they correct it. If they don't, pronounce the word and have them repeat it. Then continue reading. Discuss their errors at the end of your reading time.
6. Decide upon a silent signal that you will use with your child (e.g., a gentle elbow nudge, or finger tap on the table) so they can tell you they would like to read independently. When they give you this signal, you will stop reading out-loud or read in a whisper that "shadows" your child's reading.
7. When they make a mistake or encounter difficulty, begin reading out-loud again with your child until they let you know they want to be independent by using the silent signal.
8. Do this for about 10-20 minutes each day.

Books on Tape or CD

If you don't have the time to pair read at home, try recorded reading. Give your child a book or other reading material on audiotape or CD and let them listen on their own while reading a print version of the text. Local public libraries are an excellent source for finding books on tape or CD. This approach has been widely used in schools due to the high volume of research that indicates it to be a strong strategy for children who struggle with fluency skills. If your child listens to a story, the book should be at a slightly higher level of difficulty for the child.

Teachers often refer to this as a child's "instructional reading level." Listening to a story at their instructional level will allow them to read higher level vocabulary with the right amount of support that they will need to feel confident. While your child listens to a story they should also be pointing to the words and following along with their eyes, while also reading out-loud in a whisper voice with the CD or tape. Seeing, hearing, touching, and saying the words simultaneously will benefit your child as they progress in their development as a reader.

TV Captions

Since captioned television presents a printed text read by an expert reader, it can also be an excellent way to help support your child's reading skills. Studies have shown that people have difficulty keeping their eyes off the text when watching captioned television. This is a simple thing you can do at home to encourage your child to read and practice fluency!

Repeated Reading for Fluency

1. Use this strategy for about 15 to 30 minutes.
2. Tell your child to pick a "good-fit" book, or a book at their independent reading level.
3. Have your child read out-loud for one minute.
4. After they read, have them write down the number of words they read.
5. Have them read the same exact passage again. Again, time them for one minute and have them count the number of words they read.
6. Have them repeat this process for about 15-30 minutes.
7. Have them see if the number of words they read correctly improves the more they practice the passage.

The Neurological Impress Method

This has been extremely successful with many students who have reading difficulties and it is easy to do! Do this with your child during the time they read for their reading log.

- a. Seat your child slightly in front of you, so you can point to the words they are reading and read directly into their left ear. Have your child choose a book that they can read independently, with at least 85 to 95 percent of the words read correctly the first time.
- b. Tell your child to read out-loud with you as you point to the words. Then begin to read at a slightly slower-than-normal rate for you (*this will seem very fast for your child*). While you read be sure to point to the words as you read them (*this part is very important*). They may complain, at first, that they can not keep up with you. This should not prevent you from using this method. Explain that they are learning to become a better reader and may soon be able to keep up with you.
- c. Researchers suggest doing this for about 10-15 minutes about 2-4 times a day. A session should not last longer than 15 minutes.
- d. Continue reading out loud with your child, pointing to the words you are reading. If your child begins to read faster and is able to keep up with you, adjust your rate to be a bit faster than your child.

What should I do if my child says a word that is incorrect while reading?

Because of the way reading used to be taught, many parents feel that the only way to figure out unknown words is to "sound them out." Research has proven that this can be one of the least effective ways to figure out a word. Too many words can not be sounded out (examples: *said, know, right, etc.*). When we read, we should use three sources of information to decode the text: **meaning, structure, and visual cues**. We gather *meaning* by thinking what the story is about, looking at the pictures, and knowing that what we have read makes sense. We use *structure* cues to determine if what we have read sounds right in the sentence. We use *visual* cues to know if what we have read looks right. It is important for any reader to know how to use all of these sources of information or cues. Fluent readers do this without thinking, but children should be taught and prompted to use these strategies.

When your child makes an error within a sentence, do not interrupt. Let him/her read to the end, because the child will often go back and self-correct the errors. If not, you can help them by saying...

- a. "You said_____. Does that sound right?"
- b. "You said_____. Does that make sense?"
- c. "You said_____. Does that look right?"
- d. "If this word were_____what letter would you see at the beginning?"

After your child self-corrects an error, have them go back and reread the sentence or phrase.

If your child stops within a sentence and does not know how to "attack" a word, ask them to think about the story, check the picture, and then get their mouth ready to say the word by checking the beginning sound or sounds of that word. Then they should go back and start at the beginning of the sentence (to gather meaning) and reread the sentence.

Encourage your child to look for small words or "word chunks" within the words to decode it.

For example: The word **or** helps with more, **like** helps with bike, **day** helps with today, etc.

Our goal is for children to monitor their own reading. If the parent or teacher always supplies the word or corrects them immediately, they will not learn to monitor on their own. It is very important to encourage your child each time you see that they use a strategy that helps them monitor their own reading. You might say...

"I liked the way you..."

- tried to figure that word out
- used the picture to help you figure that word out
- noticed that something wasn't right
- tried a word that made sense
- checked the beginning (middle or ending) letter of that word
- looked for word chunks you already knew in that word
- reread the sentence when it didn't make sense
- thought about the story

My Child is always looking at the pictures and doesn't seem to be really reading. Should I cover the pictures?

Experts have learned that good readers check the pictures for clues to the story. That is why we encourage your child to use the pictures for help. Being flexible in gathering information is just another tool to help a child be successful in reading. Covering the pictures would make his search for the correct word or phrase more difficult.

Why does the teacher encourage my child to point to the words in the book?

Pointing is one of the first strategies a beginning reader can use to check his reading. Teachers sometimes use words like "Self-Monitoring" to refer to this technique. This simply means that pointing helps to remind your child to really look at the words. Some children do not realize that words convey a message. Pointing helps the child to focus and to notice the details of our written language, for instance, where one word ends and another begins. As your child develops his reading skills and grows in confidence, you will see them pointing less frequently. Your child will be able to "point with their eyes." Eventually, their eyes will move quickly across the lines of print. Pointing is just another tool to help your child read.

Please feel free to contact me by phone or email if you have any questions about how to help your child at home with reading skills.

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Please visit my website for more information on how to help your child at home...

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