

Reading With Your Child

“The more that you read, the more things you will know. The more that you learn, the more places you’ll go.” Dr Seuss

Life can be very busy, but reading with your child is very important for their success. Studies have shown that reading is more important for children’s educational success than their family’s socio-economic status (OECD, 2002). You should aim to read with your child every day. Obviously try to encourage your child to read their school book which will be based on their reading stage, but encourage them to read anything that they enjoy: comics, recipe books, newspapers, e-books. Any reading is good reading. Get comfortable and try to make reading a relaxed and enjoyable experience.

If you are a busy family, who are out and about to clubs and activities in the evening, make the most of the time you have. Get your child to read to you in the car or on the bus. They could also read to you whilst waiting to pick someone up or whilst watching a sibling have their swimming lesson or football training, for example. Five minutes here and there will all help.

As we all know, there is a lot more to reading than just reading the words off the page. Even older children, who can read the words well, can become better readers with parental support. Here are some tips to help during reading sessions with your child at home:

What is happening? Talk about what is happening in the pictures before you read the text. What can you see?

Discuss the meaning of words. Can they work out what the word might mean using the context? Use a dictionary to get your child used to exploring words for themselves.

Discuss alternative words (synonyms). For example, ask your child to think of another word that means the same as ‘big’, e.g. ‘enormous’ (use a thesaurus).

Make predictions. What do you think will happen next? What makes you think that?

Start at the end of the book. What do you think has happened before this point? Why do you think that?

Discuss feelings. How do you think the characters are feeling? What has made them feel this way?

Where is the story set? Have you read another story with the same setting?

Discuss the problem in the story. What has happened? What went wrong?

Discuss the resolution. How was the problem solved? Is there another way it could have been resolved?

Fact or fiction? Is this book a story book or a non-fiction book? How do you know?

What have you learnt? What do you know now that you didn’t know before reading the book?

What are your thoughts? Discuss how your child feels about the book, character, setting. Why do they feel that way?

During Reading

Encourage your child to use expression when reading, especially for the voices of different characters. You may want to read a section, demonstrating expression and appropriate pace, and then your child reads the same section whilst trying to copy how you read. Discuss the punctuation on the page, for example, exclamation marks. Discuss what they are for and how they are used.

After reading

In your child’s yellow reading diary, it would help us if you write down the questions you asked and your child’s response; the discussion you had; any words you discussed or ones they found tricky to read or understand.

“Reading is the gateway for children that makes other learning possible.” Barack Obama

Below are some more detailed question prompts which you may find helpful when reading with your child. These are similar questions to what we use when listening to children read in school.

KS1 children

Word meaning questions

What does the word ____ mean?
Which word tells you how ____ was feeling?
Find one word which means.....
Which word means the same as.....?

Retrieving information questions

What, Who, Where, When, Why?, How much/many?
Explain why someone did something.

Summarising and sequencing

Can you retell what happened in that paragraph/page/text?
What happened before or after?
What happened first/second/third...

Making inferences

Which words make you think that.....?
Find the word that shows that?
How can you tell that ...?
Can you explain why?
How do you think someone is feeling/felt at a point in the story? Why did s/he feel that way?
Why did something happen?
Why did someone do something?
Why did someone think something?
Why did someone describe something as?
How would you feel if...?

Making predictions

From the cover/title, what do you think will happen in this story?
What will happen next? What are the clues?
What do you think a character is likely say at the end of the story?
Do you think they would do anything differently?

