

Reading at Home- Support for Parents/ Carers

PRIDE



Tips for parents

Bestselling author Jeremy Strong on reading with your children

My first tip is to keep helping your child learn to read quite separate from reading for pleasure. Eventually the two will become one of their own accord as your child becomes a more confident reader and the great thing about this is that the vast majority of children can learn a lot about reading without even realising that that is what is happening.

This is how it's done, and it's so utterly simple and pleasurable you may well find yourself looking forward to it. All you have to do is -

1. Read to Your Child.

The more you can read to your child, the better, but the evening bedtime story is often the most appropriate, easiest and most enjoyable moment. Ten minutes is enough with a young child but if you can manage fifteen that would be even better. This is the time to settle on the bed with the child, cuddle up and enjoy whatever book has been chosen. The downside to this, if it is a downside, is that your child will soon pick up favourite books and demand that they are read over and over and over again until you are utterly bored - but your child will love it. Every time you read your child will be hearing new words in the context of a story that makes their meaning clear. They will see the print on the page. I am well aware that you and your partner may have been working all day but is ten to fifteen minutes really too much to ask? You will be giving your child an essential life-long skill - and pleasure.

2. Do not mix learning to read with bedtime reading or reading for pleasure.

Bedtime reading is a time for complete relaxation and preparation for sleep. Imagine for a moment that you are a child still struggling with reading. Your parent is reading a lovely story to you and all of a sudden hands the book over and says: 'Now you read the next page'. Excuse me? Is that a bedtime story? No, it's bedtime torture. Not only does it instantly put the child under pressure, it also destroys the comfy atmosphere you have built up and worst of all it encourages the child to associate pressure and failure with reading books. So many children are put off reading in this way.

3. The right book.

Bedtime reading. Let your child choose the book and don't worry about reading the same one again and again. You can always make an agreement that you should take it in turns to choose a book. If a new book is being introduced and it is quite apparent that the child is not really responding to it, put it aside for another time. It may be too old for them. For example Treasure Island is a great, classic story but hard going for most children under seven, not to mention some older ones too.

4. Don't worry.

Don't worry if your child keeps choosing what you think are very simple books. You are building up their confidence all the time. Children feel safe with much loved books. Reading for pleasure is NOT about pushing your child on to the next reading rung at school. It's about what it says on the tin - that word 'pleasure'.

The Pleasure Principle.

I can't say this often enough. Reading for pleasure should be exactly that. Show how much you enjoy books. Make sure your child sees you and your partner if you have one, reading. Dads have a particularly important role to play here with boys. If you want your boy to enjoy reading, enjoy it yourself. What do you do to get your boy interested in your favourite football team? Maybe you take him to matches. So you want your boy to read. Read to him. It's the same principle.

What's the point?

The point is very simple. I hope you can see that reading with your child can be such a lovely, easy and positive experience, especially at bedtime. Your child will feel safe with reading and gradually the educational side of reading will fade away as your child becomes a strong, competent reader.

Finally, you can be proud of what *you've* done. You have given your child a wonderful foundation to build on and a love of books that will last for the rest of their lives; a love that will open doors, broaden their horizons, help them make friends and inform every minute of their lives from there on.

An afterword for parents with dyslexic children.

Most of the above advice also applies to dyslexic children. After all, you are reading to your child. However, there are books available specifically for dyslexic children, written by excellent authors who produce stories that are not the least bit patronising. Barrington Stoke are a publisher that specialise in this and have been hugely successful. They have a good website.

Helping your child develop reading comprehension skills?

Prior to reading a book about animals that live in the sea, you'd first explain to your child how fish differ from land animals, and why they have to live underwater in a different environment. Previewing the text to discover unfamiliar words is also wise as it allows you to explain these to your child before you begin to read. But it doesn't stop there. Ask your child if they've ever seen a fish, either in the sea, in a river, a lake, or even in a pet shop! If they're excited about fish, take them to the aquarium and discuss the fish you see. Talking about topics really helps to develop comprehension.

More Reading; Less TV

Research indicates that children are exposed to a wider array of words in reading books compared to sitting and watching TV. Therefore, anything your child reads or has read to them will broaden their vocabulary to a greater degree than if they were to spend that time sitting and watching a TV show or a movie.

It's crucial to remember that your little one's listening vocabulary is far more expansive than their reading vocabulary. When you sit down and read a book that your child is interested in, both their writing and reading vocabularies will broaden. Why? Well, if your child has heard a specific word in context when it's read or presented to them in the classroom environment they'll have no issues recognising it, yet with far greater comprehension than if they'd never heard it in context.

Reading and Thinking Aloud

Proficient readers subconsciously create images inside their head while they're reading a book – something that is part and parcel of the natural comprehension process. When reading aloud to your child, take a moment to think out loud about what you're visualising or questions that may arise from reading the text. In short, this means explaining to your child the pictures, questions, and connections that form in your mind as you read a sentence or paragraph.

Let Your Child Lead Be Teacher!

Children spend most of their younger years being taught; it's how the learning process works. However, if you offer your child the chance to be the teacher, they'll jump at it! When reading with your child, take it in turns to summarise the text, ask questions, and make predictions about what might happen next. Remember, you must assume the role of the student and your child, the teacher. Your little teacher will love asking you questions and asking you what you think of the story. Not only will this help to build their reading comprehension, but it will also help to build confidence, something that children often lack where reading and learning is concerned.

Make it Interesting!

If there's one thing that's an absolute must, it's keeping your child motivated and interested. Even as adults, we know how quickly we can switch off if we have no interest in something or are just flat out bored, so remember that it's probably even harder for children with their over-active, creative imaginations! Discuss with your child which types of books they enjoy the most and which topics interest them more than others. Although it's essential for you to guide them in the right direction and, ultimately, develop their reading comprehension, you'll not achieve this if your child has zero motivation to read.

A great guidance video to support how to read with your child:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M4SI87VPX_4