



Ideas for supporting reading

Helping a child with reading difficulties can be challenging, but the right approach makes a big difference. This leaflet offers practical strategies to support and encourage reading at home and school.

Figuring out what the problem is

Before you start, try to find out whether the reading difficulties are:

- inability to track along the line of words
- letters seeming to move
- inability to concentrate for long
- not knowing the sounds that groups of letters make (phonics)
- not matching meaning to words
- guessing words from the first letter(s).

General rules for success

- Keep it fun – don't put pressure on the child and don't expect too much too soon.
- Practise what they know first to improve confidence – this will help them feel good.
- Praise what is done well and comment on how they have done it.
- Be ready to give help at the right time – don't let them panic and give hints to help, such as: 'That word rhymes with...' or 'Sound out the first letter.'
- Before reading, talk about the pictures, headings and titles.
- Stop when they have had enough.

How to help at primary school age

- Find a quiet time to look at books together.
- Choose books that have a high interest level for the child.
- Encourage them to try to decode words (break them down).
- Praise them for attempting words, even if they are wrong. Always look for the things they can do, rather than the ones they cannot.
- Help the child when they get to a difficult word by reading the word with them. This will help them to focus on the story, and they won't forget what they have just read.
- Take turns reading – like a line or sentence each. This can help your child become more aware of sentence structure and punctuation.
- Act out the story as you read by using different voices and encourage the child to do the same.
- Play 'knock-knock' when reading – your child can knock on the table when they find a difficult word. You can do it too when it's your turn to encourage them.
- Make some lower-case letters from things like plastic, foam, or Playdoh.
- Play games with the child to help them match the letter symbol to the sound they hear.
- Talk about letter sounds rather than letter names with your child. Use 'a' like the first sound in 'apple' and not 'ay' like the name of it in ABC.
- Make a cardboard fish, attach some magnets and 'fish' for the sound you call out.
- Talk about how letters blend together to make other sounds. Many children have difficulty with 'br' and 'bl' in words like brown and blend.
- Make duplicate cards of difficult words and play snap to help with memory.
- Buy or make pictures or so that your child can match a picture of an apple with the letter 'a', or an umbrella with the letter 'u'. Develop the task by

matching pictures to full words or encourage the child to use individual letters to create the full word.

- Identify books with repetitive phrases where your child can build their confidence by being able to predict when the phrase will next come up.
- Bring reading into everyday activities by encouraging your child to read information on things like cereal packets, street signs and recipes.
- Allow your child to enjoy stories and books through audio books and eBooks where
 - they can follow the words as they are being read aloud.
- Don't advance the level of reading until the child is ready to do so.
- Request word lists from teachers in advance to give the child extra time to practise.

How to help at secondary school age

Read news articles together and talk about what they mean.

If they are reading books which have been made into a play or film, encourage them to watch it. This may give them a better grasp of the storyline and raise their level of understanding.

Try to make reading fun by not just reading 'school books', find books about their interests. For example if they are a budding comedian try joke books, if they are interested in particular people, see if there are autobiographies.

How technology can help

- Being able to download books onto reading devices like a Kindle or i-Pad allows you to hear words and their meanings read aloud. The background of the screen is colour changeable so it can also help readers with visual issues.
- CALL Scotland has a database of school resources which are available in alternative formats which can help with reading class texts and studying.

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www.callscotland.org.uk

- Try screen-reading software which will read out text.
- Explore other methods for studying such as researching clips from YouTube, accessing electronic versions of study guides and using text-to-speech technology.
- Calibre is a national charity providing a subscription-free postal service of unabridged audio books for adults and children who struggle to read.

www.calibreaudio.org.uk

- In addition to the above, identify audio books for course texts which can be listened to on a mobile or smart speaker. Your child could listen as they are walking to and from school, or in their study time.
- EduApps consists of eight useful software collections that are free to download and use. They can help with difficulties with studying, reading and writing.

www.eduappcenter.com/

Accessible books

Check your library for accessible books, such as large print, electronic books, quick reads or audio books. Also look up 'books for reluctant readers' from companies like Barrington Stoke.