

Reading at Home: Hints & Tips for Parents

Reading at home is one of the best ways to support your child's learning — but it doesn't always have to mean sitting down with a book and being tested on every word!

The most important thing is to make reading enjoyable, talk about what you read, and build a regular habit.



1. Make reading part of everyday life

Reading happens everywhere, not just in books.

Encourage your child to read:

- Comics and magazines
- Recipes
- Menus
- Shopping lists
- Signs and posters
- Instructions for games or toys
- Subtitles on television
- Information books
- Websites and age-appropriate online content

The more children see reading as something useful and enjoyable, the more motivated they are to do it.

2. Let your child choose

Where possible, let your child choose what they want to read.

They might prefer:

- Funny stories
- Adventure books
- Animals
- Football or other sports
- Space
- Mysteries
- Comics
- Non-fiction
- Poetry

It doesn't matter if it's not the book you would have chosen! Developing a love of reading is more important than always choosing the “perfect” book.

3. Read together

Reading together is valuable even when your child can read independently.

You could:

- Take turns reading a page.
- Read a character's dialogue together.
- Let your child read one paragraph while you read the next.
- Read a story aloud while your child follows along.
- Listen to an audiobook together.

Hearing fluent reading helps children develop expression, vocabulary and understanding.

4. Talk about the book

You don't need to give your child a reading test after every story!

Instead, have a natural conversation.

Try asking:

- “What did you think of that?”
- “Which character do you like best?”
- “What do you think might happen next?”
- “Why do you think they did that?”
- “What was the funniest part?”
- “Did anything surprise you?”
- “Does this remind you of anything?”

There isn't always one “right” answer. Encourage your child to explain their ideas.

5. Ask questions before, during and after reading

Before reading, look at the cover and ask:

“What do you think this book might be about?”

During reading:

“What do you think is going to happen?”

After reading:

“What was the main thing that happened?”

This helps children develop prediction, comprehension and reasoning skills.

6. Don't immediately tell them an unfamiliar word

If your child gets stuck, give them time to work it out.

Encourage them to:

- Look at the letters and sounds.
- Read the sentence again.
- Look at the pictures for clues.
- Think about what would make sense.
- Break a longer word into smaller parts.

You could ask:

“What could you try?”

rather than immediately giving them the answer.

7. Talk about new words

Reading is a brilliant way to build vocabulary.

When you come across an unfamiliar word, stop and discuss it.

For example:

“The character was furious. What do you think furious means?”

Then connect it to words they already know:

“Furious means very angry. Can you think of another word that means angry?”

Using new words in everyday conversation helps children remember them.

8. Read the same book more than once

Re-reading is not a waste of time.

The first time, your child may focus on decoding the words. On another reading, they can concentrate more on the meaning, characters and details.

You might say:

“We know what happens now — let's see if we can spot anything we missed the first time.”

9. Make reading a relaxing routine

Try creating a regular reading time.

For example:

- 10–15 minutes before bed
- A quiet time after school
- Reading together at the weekend
- A family reading time where everyone reads their own book

Having a predictable routine can help reading become a habit rather than a battle.

10. Don't worry if they don't always want to read

Children can have days when they are tired, distracted or simply don't feel like reading.

Try offering choices:

“Would you like to read your book or shall I read to you?”

“Would you like a story or your comic tonight?”

Keeping the experience positive is important.

11. Read aloud to your child

Even older children benefit from being read to.

Choose books that are perhaps above their independent reading level and enjoy them together.

Reading aloud exposes children to:

- Rich vocabulary
- Different sentence structures
- New ideas
- Humour
- Different genres
- More complex stories

And, importantly, it gives you something enjoyable to share.

12. Let them see you reading

Children notice what adults do.

Let them see you reading:

- Books
- Newspapers
- Magazines
- Recipes
- Instructions
- Novels
- Non-fiction

You can occasionally talk about what you're reading:

“I'm really enjoying this book because...”

This shows children that reading isn't simply something they have to do for school — it's something people do for pleasure and information.

13. Don't compare them with other children

Children learn to read at different rates.

Try to focus on your child's progress, rather than how quickly another child is reading.

Small improvements matter:

- Reading a little more fluently
- Recognising a new word
- Understanding a new idea
- Choosing to read independently
- Talking confidently about a story

14. Make comprehension part of the conversation

Reading isn't just about saying the words correctly — it's about understanding them.

Occasionally ask your child to explain:

- What happened?
- Why did it happen?
- How is a character feeling?

- What evidence can they find?
- What might happen next?
- What is the author trying to tell us?

Encourage them to go back to the text to find evidence rather than relying only on memory.

15. Keep it enjoyable

The biggest tip is simple:

Try to make reading something your child looks forward to.

A child who develops a love of books and stories has gained something that can support them throughout their education and beyond.

A simple 10–15 minute reading routine

2 minutes: Look at the book together and talk about what you expect to happen.

5–8 minutes: Read together, taking turns if appropriate.

2–3 minutes: Talk about what you've read.

1 minute: Choose something to look forward to next time — *“I wonder what will happen to the character tomorrow...”*

And remember: reading together, talking about books and listening to stories all count. It doesn't have to be perfect to be valuable.

Helpful sites for reading and spelling-

<https://literacytrust.org.uk/parents-and-families/>

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/articles/zbxby9q>