



Developing Reading Skills at Home

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Research has proven that reading at home greatly accelerates the acquisition of reading skills, and shows a strong connection between independent reading and developing reading skills that lead to fluency. Learning to read is a lengthy and difficult process for many children, and success in learning to read is based in large part on developing language and literacy-related skills very early in life. To develop an appreciation of stories and books, children need a great deal of experience with literature, as active listeners and active participants. Here are some tips to help make reading at home with both pre-school and school aged children more successful.

- s Set the atmosphere, help your child find a quiet, comfortable place to read.
- s Make reading an enjoyable and relaxed time.
- s Keep reading times short (15-30 minutes).
- s Let the child choose a book to read (even if it is the same one over and over again!)
- s Have your child see you as a reading model.
- s Read to your child. Reread favourite stories.
- s Read with your child
- s Discuss the stories you read together.
- s Visit the library as often as possible.
- s Read the hard parts to your child.
- s Let your child use the pictures to help him/herself when stuck.
- s Encourage your child to use the following "**When You're Stuck**" suggestions instead of sounding out the words.



When You're Stuck...

1. Look at the picture.
2. What would make sense? Think about the story.
3. Go back and read the sentence again. Think about what would make sense.
4. Does it sound right? Would you say it that way?
5. Sound the first letter of the hard word.
6. Do you know another word that looks like that?
7. Look for part of the word that you know.
8. Use the first and last sound of the word.

In addition to reading to and with your child, pre-reading skills can be practised in a variety of ways with very little set up or using items around the house. The following are a sample of fun and short (fifteen minutes maximum) activities that can be done almost anywhere.

Practise rhyming words. Say a word (for example "black" the child must say a word that rhymes "tack") The word must rhyme but may be a nonsense word (ugly and buggly) or a word that rhymes but is not spelled the same (fly and cry).

Mystery Box. Place plastic letters or pieces of paper with letters printed on them into a colourful gift bag or box. The child reaches into the box and pulls out a letter. The child then must name the letter or say the sound of the letter. Start with using only capital letters when the child has reached mastery then lowercase letters can be included.



Tracing for Memory. Materials: sandpaper, sand/rice in a large pan, textured paper, textured surface.

1. Adult prints a capital letter on a sheet of paper, make it quite large (15-20 cm). 1-3 letters can be practised in one sitting.
2. Ask your child to trace the letter and say the name or sound (repeat 2-3 times). If your child does not know or remember, tell them and have them try again.
3. Ask your child to then make the letter in the air, close their eyes and make the letter in the air again while saying the letter name or sound (repeat 2-3 times).
4. Trace the letter on the paper again then make the letter on a textured surface 2-4 times while saying the letter name or sound.

Other options: After the adult makes the letter card have the child make the letter with playdough, pipe cleaners, etc. then follow steps 2-4.

Alphabet Cereal. Give your child a small bowl of Alphabet Cereal and ask them to match letters that are the same. After matching discuss the letter names or sounds of each pair and those which are not matched. Eat the cereal as the game progresses or at the end. YUM!

Sound Boxes. To help children learn letter sounds, choose a letter for the week or a few days and have your child collect items (you can help!) that begin with that letter sound. Decorate the box with the letter and take turns exploring the items and saying the names emphasizing the first sound. This not only helps children learn letter sounds but also is a great vocabulary builder.

Remember reading isn't just storybooks, there are great early level non-fiction books and children's magazines that can be discovered at your school or neighbourhood library.

