

A Parent's Guide to Reading at Home

It is important that when reading with your child you also focus on the **comprehension** (understanding of what is happening in the story) aspect of the book as well as the sounding out of words. Some children may be able to easily read their book and to say all of the words, but they also need to make sure they have a full understanding of what it is about, what the key words mean, and many other features of the text. In addition to their school reading book, you could also let your child read 'harder words' books at home- this will help them to learn new words. But at school we focus all aspects of the book.

To help your child with the 'understanding' and 'sounding out' aspect of their reading books, here are a list of points that your child will benefit from learning to do:

- To be able to sound out familiar words fluently and automatically (without being prompted)
- To be able to decode/sound out familiar and some unfamiliar words using blending. There will be words that can't be decoded by blending and these are called 'tricky' words (such as: said, were, there, little, they, all, are) These words have to be memorised to be learned.
- To be able to develop an awareness of punctuation marks. Eg. full stops, capital letters, question marks, exclamation marks etc. – and to understand why they are being used in the sentence.
- To be able to remember the sequence of stories. What happened first? What happened next? Then what happened? Finally, what happened?
- To be able to locate pages or sections of interest. What was your favourite part of the book? Can you show me where that happened? What happened when.....? Can you show me where that is? How did the character feel when? Can you show me where it says that?
- To be able to identify who is speaking in a story. How do you know that they are speaking? (this is where you could talk about speech marks and what they are used for) How do you know when the character has stopped speaking? (end of speech mark) Who is speaking in this part of the story? (the part where the author narrator is talking about the characters)
- To be able to comment or ask questions about the meaning of parts of the text. Why is there a diagram in this book? What does it tell us? (That it's an information/non-fiction book) What is happening in the picture? Why has the font/writing style changed in this part? (It may have got bigger because the character is shouting, or for another reason.)
- To be able to comment on the look of the writing, titles, labels. For example, if the story book is about 'monsters' the title may be in the style of slimy writing. So, to ask the child why the writing is like that?
- To be able to comment on obvious features of language e.g rhymes, repetition of text and interesting words or phrases. (Reading short poetry could help them with this-poetry that interests them, and they can relate to- comical poetry)
- To be able to comment on their likes and dislikes and to relate it to their own experience. (Obviously, some stories cannot be linked to a child's own experience but if the story is about going to the park or going on holiday then the child will be able to talk about their own experience.)

- To be able to think about other stories that they have read that may be similar to the one that they are reading (fairy tale stories for instance, or for example 'The Runaway Chapati' can be linked to 'The gingerbread man' story because the theme is the same. You could ask them: What typically happens to good and bad characters? And discuss differences between types of text in which photos or drawings are used (fiction/story books and non-fiction/information books).
- To be aware that there are differences between information/non-fiction and story/ fiction books. Information books may have captions, a contents page, a glossary, photos and talk about real, factual things. They are usually written to help us to understand how something works, or how to make something. Story/fiction books usually don't have a contents page (unless it's a book of lots of stories/ anthology- they usually contain pictures- drawings , instead of photos and are usually made up but can sometimes be related to real life experience).
- You may also like to ask your child: Why has the author written this book? It could be to make the reader laugh, or to help the reader understand how to make something, or because it might help the reader who is going through a similar experience like a new baby in the family (if the book is about that.)