

# Supporting Reading at Home

## Some notes and ideas to help

Teaching and practising reading skills involves many complicated processes, all of which join together to enable children to read independently for pleasure and understanding.

These notes will help you to support the process of listening to your child read at home. You do not have to fit in every single bit of these notes - depending on the book you are reading with the child, some skills will become more/less important.

### Pre-Reading

Before starting a book, it is important to help the children to prepare and get ready. This is known as 'engaging with the text'.

You should encourage them to look at the cover, find clues about what the book will be about; read the blurb and think about how it makes them feel; make predictions, express opinions with reasons etc so that they are ready to begin reading. This process should hopefully make the children excited about starting to read the book. (Hooking them in.)

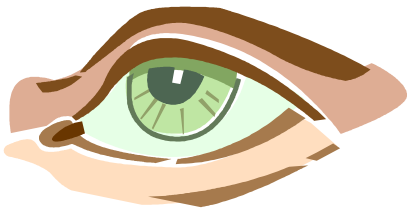
### Reading

1. The first reading process is called **DE-CODING**. This means the actual ability to read the word, to sound it out. Some children will need help with this and you will need to help them with **PHONICS**. This means making the sound of each letter in the word, then blending them together to pronounce the word properly.

(See the phonics/letter sound sheet if you need to be reminded of this.)

2. As you are listening to their reading, it is good practice to ask them questions to check their understanding of particular words, sentences and sections of the text.

There are 3 different types of comprehension question, in general, which broadly fit into these categories:



Literal questions - these are the easiest type. Basically, you use your eye to search for a straightforward answer to a question, where the answer is 'looking at you' directly from the text.

e.g. Text: The little girl was sitting on the swing, singing.

Question: What was the girl sitting on?

If the children are struggling to answer a question like this, repeat the question and ask them to identify a key word in the question which will help them to locate the correct answer in the text.



Inference/deduction questions - these need the reader to act as a detective, to look for clues and then interpret these clues to come up with an answer.  
e.g. Text: Sarah's eyes and nose were red and her face was swollen. She blew her nose noisily into a tissue and hugged her body more tightly as she burrowed into the soft armchair.

Question: How was Sarah feeling? How do you know? (Depending on the story she could be feeling ill - maybe has a cold as her eyes and nose are red and she blew her nose - , sad, upset - she may have been crying 'face was swollen...eyes red' etc).



Evaluative questions - these need the reader to think around the question and to add their own knowledge and experience to coming up with an answer. They often, but not always, include the word 'you'. (Empathy is an important skill here, as well as forming and justifying their own opinions.)

e.g. Text: As the boy sprinted across the field, he searched for a place to hide but could see nowhere. He wondered to himself if he had made a mistake running towards the countryside rather than back towards the city. Maybe he would have found safety more quickly in a shop or pub, rather than risking leading his pursuers somewhere he would more easily be caught. The lights of the van were coming closer and he realised the van was just pulling up to the fence. Quickly he threw himself flat to the ground, hoping that the grass was long enough to disguise the fact that he was lying there.

Question: How do you think the boy felt at that moment?  
What would you have done if you were him?

Other really important ideas to ask children about when reading:

Skim - means read the text quickly and not particularly carefully, so that you just pick up the general idea about it but not the detail.

Scan - search for specific words or pieces of information. This helps to find answers in comprehension activities and tests.

Prediction - can they make a good guess at what might happen next? This means that they have understood the story so far and are able to use the clues to make a sensible guess about what may be coming up.

Summarising - can they sum up a section or chapter or paragraph in a few words? Can they retell a part of the story in their own, different words? Can they recap what has already been read?

Referring to the evidence - what is it in the story or text which has made them think what they think? Can they point to specific words or phrases which gave them an idea? This is really important as it shows that they have understood certain words properly. You may have to prompt or support this to start with as children get used to words like 'evidence'.  
Talk about any pictures or illustrations and what these add to the story in terms of meaning. Do the pictures agree with their own imaginary images created by the words which they have in their heads?

Talk about the layout or structure of a text - can they identify different features such as headings, sub-headings, bullet points, pictures, captions, labels, diagrams, maps, charts etc? Can they identify an introduction or conclusion, or the reason why an author has changed paragraph?

Can they talk about the effect of using colour, shape and other presentational features and how effective these are?

An even harder part of this is to ask them if they can make a guess as to *why* the author has used certain features or what the author wants the reader to think about these. This is a higher level skill, but a very important one, especially in reading tests.

Focus on the language used - this will stretch your brains too! Ask the children to identify the adjective/adverb/verb/proper noun etc in a sentence.

Can they identify a simile or metaphor etc, what ever is there?

What do certain words mean? It might be a good idea to have a dictionary handy so they can look it up - dictionary skills are really important.

Can you think of a different word which means the same as ....?

Harder - what would be the effect of changing a certain word? - e.g. The enormous giant staggered noisily towards the spindly beanstalk. Each underlined adjective, verb or adverb could be changed to create a very different effect, depending on what the author wants the reader to think and feel.

Focus on the punctuation used - can the children correctly identify different punctuation marks? When they can, can they correctly explain why a certain mark has been used in that place? This is really important for both understanding texts as well as the new Spelling, Punctuation and Grammar test in year 6 SATs.

All through the reading you can be asking them what they are enjoying or not enjoying, and why. Talking and discussing anything linked to reading is an excellent way of helping children to think and to learn to formulate their ideas and opinions. This is a vital step in learning to communicate effectively. If children can talk effectively, they are much more likely to be able to write effectively.