

How to read with your child



When we share a book with our children, we are doing something very special. For those few minutes, the outside world stops as we read about elephants or pirates or fairies. Reading with your child doesn't mean just reading from books you can also share stories, rhymes or any other writing. Reading together not only increases literacy skills, it can help to build strong and loving relationships between you. As an added bonus, research proves children who love to read do better at school in all subjects.

Set aside some time Find somewhere quiet with no distractions – turn off the TV/radio/computer.

Ask your child to choose a book Not only are they more likely to engage in a book they have chosen, it shows you care what they think and that their opinion matters.

Sit close together Encourage your child to hold the book themselves and/or turn the pages.

Point to the pictures If there are pictures, relate them to something your child knows. Ask them to describe the characters or situation or what will happen next. Encourage them to tell you the story by looking at the pictures. You don't have to talk about every picture on every page, choose the pages they'll be interested in.

Encourage your child to talk about the book Talking about the characters and their dilemmas helps children understand relationships, helps you discuss difficult issues and is an excellent way for you to get to know how each other think. Give your child the time they need to respond. Ask them what they think will happen next, how a character may be feeling or how the book makes them feel.

Don't be nervous to read out loud It is just you and your child/children; there is no one to judge or tell us we've said a word wrong or missed a page; although, if it's a book you've read before, there's no promise your child won't tell you. Children love spending time with the grown-ups in their lives. They are not critical or judgemental; they just appreciate sharing the time and experience with us.

Read the same book again and again About two-thirds of children have a favourite book; these are the stories we're asked to read again and again and again! As adults we tend to read the same magazines, the same newspapers, listen to the same radio station or watch the same television shows each week. We choose to go back to something we enjoy. If your child has a favourite book, it is because they enjoy it. It could be that the dog in the story looks like your dog or the cat looks like the cat that comes in to your garden. It could be the funny voice you use makes them laugh. It could be the tickle or kiss they get on page 4. These favourite stories are helping them learn that books are fun, literacy is fun and that reading is something they want to do. If your child doesn't have a favourite book and likes lots of different books don't panic, continue to share lots of different types of books with them, because that is what they enjoy.

Above all – MAKE IT FUN! It doesn't matter how you read with a child, as long as you both enjoy the time together. Don't be afraid to use funny voices...Children love this!

Reading with younger children



It's never too early to start reading with your child. Some ways you can try to share some stories and rhymes with your child everyday:

Sing rhymes and tell stories to your unborn baby From around 18 weeks your baby can hear you and will recognise your voice before they are born.

Ask your health visitor about free Bookstart Baby and Treasure Packs You will get 2 free books and lots of advice to get you started. The Bookstart Baby pack will include 2 board books, a rhyme sheet and a booklet of tips and ideas for sharing books, you should receive this in your baby's first year. In the Bookstart Treasure pack, you will receive a picture book for you to share plus a friendly leaflet with helpful tips and ideas for reading together; you should receive this when your child is 3-4 years old.

Pick books with lots of pictures Choose a book with good pictures that you can talk about for a few minutes.

Choose board books and flap books These are great for very young children who want to eat their books as well as look at them. Children love the anticipation of what's hidden beneath the flap. Talk about what you see on the page and don't worry at this stage about reading the words.

Join a library as soon as you can Librarians give great advice on books and recommendations. Plus libraries have more books than you could ever own!

It's important to own books If you really enjoy a library book buy it! Mark every birthday or special occasion with the gift of a book.

