

Ideas for supporting children and young people with reading

Children,
Parents &
Teachers

Before you start, try to find out whether the reading difficulties are:

- inability to track along the line of words
- letters seeming to move
- inability to concentrate for long
- not knowing the sounds groups of letters make (phonics)
- not matching meaning to words
- guessing words from the first letter(s)
- fear of failing.

General rules

- Keep it fun – don't put pressure on the child and don't expect too much too soon.
- Practise what they know first to improve confidence – this will help them feel good.
- Praise what is done well and comment on how they have done it.
For example: 'Well done – you broke that word down really well.'
- Be ready to give help at the right time – don't let them panic and give hints to help, such as: 'That word rhymes with...'
or 'Sound out the first letter.'
- Before reading, talk about the pictures, headings and titles.
- Stop when they have had enough.



How to help primary school pupils

- Find a quiet time to look at books together.
- Choose books that have a high interest level for the child.
- Encourage them to try to decode words (break them down).
- Praise them for attempting words, even if they are wrong. Always look for the things they can do, rather than the ones they cannot.
- Help the child when they get to a difficult word by reading the word with them. This will help them to focus on the story, and they won't forget what they have just read.
- Take turns reading – like a line or sentence each. This can help your child become more aware of sentence structure and punctuation.
- Act out the story as you read by using different voices and encourage the child to do the same.
- Play 'knock-knock' when reading – your child can knock on the table when they find a difficult word. You can do it too when it's your turn to encourage them.
- Buy some lower case letters made from plastic or foam, or make some from play-doh. Play games with your child to help them match the letter symbol to the sound they hear.
- Talk about letter sounds rather than letter names with your child. Use 'a' like the first sound in 'apple' and not 'ay' like the name of it in ABC.
- Make a cardboard fish, attach some magnets and 'fish' for the sound you call out.
- Make or buy lotto sound bingo where your child must cover the letter they hear.
- Talk about how letters blend together to make other sounds. Many children have difficulty with 'br' and 'bl' in words like brown and bring or black and blend. Some other blends to look out for are 'gr', 'gl', 'tr', 'sp', 'st' and also 'str', 'spr', and 'ch', 'sh' and 'th'.
- Make duplicate cards of difficult words and play snap or pairs to help with memory.
- Buy or make pictures or so that your child can match a picture of an apple with the letter 'a', or an umbrella with the letter 'u'. Develop the task by matching pictures to full words or encourage the child to use individual letters to create the full word.
- Identify books with repetitive phrases where your child can build their confidence by being able to predict when the phrase will next come up.
- Bring reading into everyday activities by encouraging your child to read information on things like cereal packets, street signs, supermarkets, TV guides, recipes and so on.
- Allow your child to enjoy stories and books through audio books and eBooks where they can follow the words as they are being read aloud.
- Don't advance the level of reading until the child is ready to do so.
- Request word lists from teachers in advance to give the child extra time to practise.



How to help secondary school pupils

- Use any appropriate suggestions from the section above.
- Read newspaper articles together and talk about what they mean.
- If they are reading books which have been made into a play or film, encourage them to watch it. This may give them a better grasp of the storyline and raise their level of understanding. Check with the class teacher beforehand to see what they might recommend.
- Try to make reading fun by not just reading 'school books'. For example is your child a budding comedian (joke books), are they interested in people's lives (autobiographies). If they have an interest in specific topics like sports, fashion, animals or history, find books that reflect this. It can also be useful to buy books that accompany television programmes such as 'Planet Earth' or 'Doctor Who.'
- Explore other methods for studying such as researching clips from YouTube, accessing electronic versions of study guides and using text to speech technology.



How technology can help

- Being able to download books onto reading devices like a Kindle or i-Pad allows you to hear words and their meanings read aloud. The background of the screen is grey or colour changeable so it can also help readers with visual issues.
- Similarly you can change the setting on your computer to allow for the screen to be a different colour as well as changing the font colour, type and size.
- CALL Scotland has a database of school resources which are available in alternative formats which can help with reading class texts and studying. www.callscotland.org.uk
- Look into screen-reading software which will read out text.
- Calibre is a national charity providing a subscription-free postal service of unabridged audio books for adults and children who struggle to read. www.calibre.org.uk
- Lochaber High School Podcasts are recordings of main texts needed for Standard Grade and Higher examinations. The can be freely downloaded at: <http://lhs.typepad.co.uk/weblog/podcast>
- In addition to the above, identify audio books for course texts – which can be listened to on an MP3 player/i-Pod. Your child may be able to listen as they are walking to and from school, or in their study time. They may also listen to the text whilst following it in the book.
- EduApps consists of eight useful software collections that are free to download and use. They can help with difficulties with studying, reading and writing. www.eduapps.org/. There is a variety of free apps for i-Pads, i-Phones and Android phones which might be useful.
- Check your library for accessible books, such as large print, electronic books, quick reads or audio books. Also look into ‘books for reluctant readers’.



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