

Supporting Your Child in Reading (K-8)

Ways you can help your child at home when reading EVERY DAY:

1. Choose the right book using the "five-finger rule." Have your child open the book to a page in the middle of the book and read that page. Each time your child comes to a word he does not know, he should hold up a finger. If he gets to five fingers before finishing the page, the book is too hard. If he doesn't hold up any fingers, the book is probably easy for your child and can be used to build reading fluency.

2. Use sound strategies to tackle a new word. Ask your child to sound out an unknown word. Look at the letters in a difficult word and have your child pronounce each sound, or phoneme. Then see if he can blend the sounds together to pronounce the word. Help him memorize irregular words and common sight words. Use suffixes, prefixes, and root words.

3. Use the story to help your child learn. Ask your child what word or idea would make sense in the plot of the story when he gets stuck on an unfamiliar word. Encourage your child to look at illustrations, pictures, titles, or graphs to figure out the meaning of new words.

4. Give support and encouragement. Challenge your child to figure out new words, but always supply the word before he becomes frustrated. After your child has read a story, reread it aloud yourself so that he can enjoy it without interruption.

5. Be a good role model. Let your child see you reading, and share your excitement when you enjoy a great book of your own.

6. Make reading a priority. Aim for 15 – 30 minutes every afternoon or evening. It helps to set aside a specific time for reading. This kind of special "together time" can go a long way toward getting your child interested in books.

7. Create the right atmosphere. Find a quiet comfortable place to listen to your child read. While you don't need to build a special reading nook, it helps to ensure that, even in a busy home, there's a quiet place for reading.

8. Make reading fun. Kids may not get excited about the idea of quiet time spent curled up on the couch. Play around with funny voices to impersonate animals or unusual characters in stories.

9. Keep reading aloud to your child. Don't stop reading aloud to your child once she learns to read by himself. When you read to him, you let your child enjoy books that are beyond his independent reading level and build his vocabulary by exposing him to new words. Reading aloud is also a chance for you to model reading smoothly and with expression.

10. Introduce new books. Try to encourage a variety of genres and authors.

How to promote comprehension when reading at home:

Make connections

Encourage your child to make personal connections to the content of the book he is reading. You could even jot the connections on sticky notes and stick them in the book.

- Text-to-self connections are easiest. We merely relate concepts in the book to aspects of our own lives.
- Text-to-text connections are also fun and easy. Relate the book you're currently reading to another book you've read.
- Text-to-world connections are trickier. With these connections, you want to relate what you've just read to a larger, worldly phenomenon, and not just something in your own life.

Infer

Making inferences is similar to the text-to-world connection strategy. Gradually work with your child on drawing conclusions based on what information he knows. Likewise, show him how to make educated guesses, and to look for hints to back up the reasoning.

Predictions

What does he think will happen next? Next and next? Discuss reasons for making the predictions and see if they come true.

Determine importance

Practice determining importance with your child. Explicitly model how you determine what is important. Show your child how you might look in topic sentences, or at bullet points, titles, or headings to make more sense of a passage. Practice highlighting a passage together.

Visualize

One of the best parts of reading is to picture the story or the content in one's head. If it's non-fiction, ask him to draw his own pictures of the content.

Questions

Asking children questions is the simplest way to ensure they have understood material. Don't wait until the end of the selection, stop at points during the story and ask strategic, thinking type questions that help the child understand the meaning of the story.