



## Reading Together Top Tips for Children Aged 3 - 11



### Reading Together: Supporting 3-4 Year Olds

At this stage, it is all about making sure children get off to the best possible start with reading. As well as sharing and enjoying books, parents and other family members will be introducing them to the very first skills of reading.

#### Top Tips:

- Read together and read every day. Children need to read little and often so try to set aside a regular time slot that suits the whole family.
- Read everywhere! Read on the move and show the child that they can read words no matter where they are. Point out words they might be likely to recognise such as signs and logos.
- Find their favourites stories. Children love to listen to and read their favourite books again and again. Enjoyment and memory play a key role in learning to read. Build on this base of favourites by reading all kinds of stories including rhymes, poetry and information books too.
- Start prompting the child to join in with the sections that are repeated in stories – especially in traditional fairytales – e.g. ‘Run, run, run as fast as you can! You can’t catch me, I’m the gingerbread man!’
- Talk about books, words and pictures. Before you start reading a book together, talk about the title, the pictures on the front and back covers and the pictures inside. Ask the child what they think the story might be about.
- Talk about the stories they read and the events which occur. Ask questions. Encourage the child to ask questions too.
- Retelling the stories the child has just read is a valuable exercise for memory as well as making sure that they understand what they have just read. Prompt them by asking questions like: *What happened first? What next? And then what? Can you remember what happens at the end?* Encourage them to use plenty of expression while re-enacting the story.

## Reading Together: Supporting 4-5 Year Olds

Reading together every day will still be an important part of the reading relationship with a 4-5 year old child. Most picture books will still be too hard for a 4-5 year old child to read alone but they will enjoy listening to a story and talking about the pictures.

### Top Tips:

- Keep talking about the books they read – before and after you read them. If it is a new book, ask the child what they think it might be about. If it is a familiar favourite, talk about why it is loved so much.
- Use lots of expression and intonation when reading and try different voices for different characters. Encourage children to join in too.
- Keep asking each other questions.
- Encourage children to retell stories and events from their own everyday lives; what happens at school and with their friends.
- Listen to the child reading, especially if they are bringing home books from their library or school to read. These are often part of reading schemes and are designed to help the child to read independently and to apply their phonic skills by sounding out the words on the page.
- The child will also start learning comprehension skills, understanding story sequences, structure, language and characters, and becoming familiar with how a book works. They are learning that words carry meaning and that we read across the page from left to right and from top to bottom as well.
- Reading through structured play may be very beneficial to the child at this age, encouraging good speaking, listening, reading and writing. Language games, play and role play will all aid their reading development.
- Re-reading books is good practice for any child. They must be able to comprehend a story as they are reading it. It is important not to push them too quickly on to new books.

## Reading Together: Supporting 6-7 Year Olds

- Continue to help the child to gain confidence and to maintain a good balance between reading for enjoyment and skills practice as their reading skills improve.
- Keep reading and sharing books. Don't give up on talking about picture books and sharing bedtime stories. Choose what to read together and exchange views.
- Try reading slightly more difficult books together – the adult can read one page and the child the next. Hearing an adult read fluently will help the child to see what reading can mean to them.
- Encourage children to have an opinion on the books that are read together. Talk about the characters and events in a story and encourage them to say what they think. Let them say if they do not like a book and why. Make links between events in the book and the child's own experiences.
- Put an emphasis on expression and intonation.
- When listening to the child read, ensure that the books they are taking home are the appropriate level for their ability. The words should be readable for the child.
- Back-tracking through a story can often be useful as it helps with meaning, flow and confidence. Ask the child to re-read sentences and pages if they have found them particularly tricky.

## Reading Together: Supporting 7-8 Year Olds

- Continue to support the child as they start becoming a more independent reader, making choices and developing preferences for different types of books. They are strengthening what they are learning at this age and starting to apply their reading skills to their everyday lives.
- At this stage, children are still learning letter sounds for spelling and reading and these are now more complex. They look at the same sounds but with different spelling patterns, such as long vowel sounds. Help them with these sounds when reading with them and reinforce the letter sounds they have previously learned. This will help the child to start automatically applying their phonic skills when reading unfamiliar words.
- Appreciate that as the child reads wider varieties of texts, they will be developing their comprehension skills, learning to understand the sequence of a story and recognising and using story language.
- Play reading and language games as these are very useful at this stage and will enrich the child's development as a reader. Learning is still most effective when it is active, so role play and drama are important.
- In terms of linking reading to writing, help the child to identify and use capital letters and punctuation, writing simple sentences, using story language and using a widening vocabulary.
- At this age, most children are reading whole books on their own and some will be able to read beyond the level of infant reading books. If a child wants to revisit books they read when they were younger, parents should be supportive and encourage them to look at the old stories in a different way.
- The child is now drawing ideas and information from a text and will be able to discuss how particular words and phrases are used. The child should be able to suggest reasons behind the events in the stories they read. Adults should talk about books as much as possible and they will become more articulate in this field.

## Reading Together: Supporting 9-11 Year Olds

- Encourage children to read at least a chapter every night before they go to bed so that it becomes part of their night-time routine. It will remind them of the times they shared reading together when they were younger and will also illustrate to them how far they have come as readers.
- Tell children that there is support on hand to answer any questions they might have. Let them know that even adults get confused by books sometimes and that it is perfectly okay if they do not understand something. The important thing is to ask for help so they do not miss out on an exciting part of the story.
- Give them a notebook and a pencil and tell them to jot down any word they come across that they do not understand. Then, when reading time is over, the adult can go through the list of words with them, working out the meaning by going back to the sentence where they appeared in the story and looking them up in a dictionary. Come up with a definition together and have the child write it into their notebook. This way they will have their own personalised dictionary associated with specific stories and examples.
- Talk to the child about the books they are reading. As much as possible, family members should try to read the books the child is reading so they know the story and can talk to the child from a position of mutual interest. Make suggestions: “I saw this and thought you might like it”, etc.
- Suggest creating a family library. A home library can greatly benefit the entire family’s reading development. Parents should talk to their children about what each likes to read and start a collection that caters to everyone’s taste. This will bring the family together as a reading unit. Place books for children on the lowest shelves so they can access them independently. By encouraging children to organise their own shelves and set aside their personal favourites, parents will be helping them to express their affection for books while showing them that they respect their reading.