

Supporting in the early stages of reading

When reading with a child: give them time, let them attempt unknown words, help them sound the first letters, use the pictures for clues, ask lots of questions about the story.

When you hear the child read:

- Let the child hold the book.
- Point to the words as they read them.
- If it is a new book, always start by having a look at the book's cover, title, pictures and characters.
- Talk about the pictures.
- Allow plenty of time for discussion before you turn over the page. 'What do you think will happen next?' etc.
- Let the child retell the story to you. Don't worry if they decide to make an alternative ending - Make reading fun and make sure you praise the child's efforts.

Helping the child read a word

- When the child tries to 'sound out' words, encourage the use of phonetic letter sounds rather than 'alphabet names'.
- Maintain the flow. If the child mispronounces a word allow them the opportunity to self-correct. If they can't prompt them as below
- Which letter sounds (phonemes) do you recognise? Can you say them?
- Can you blend the different sounds together?
- Does the word make sense? Read the sentence again to check.
- Have you read the word before? Can you find it on another page?
- Are there any bits of the word you recognise? Miss out the word you are finding tricky and finish the sentence. Then go back and work out what the word is.
- The same strategies apply for helping the child attempt new words, but at this stage their phonic knowledge and fluency has developed.
- Encourage the child to look carefully at punctuation and how this affects their expression as they read.

At this stage it is useful to ask more specific questions about what they are reading.

Useful questions give different ways to check and clarify understanding

- What does this word mean?
- Can this word have more than one meaning?
- What happened at the beginning?
- What did the.....do? - Which word told you that.....?
- Describe.....
- Which paragraph tells you.....?
- Why do.....?
- What type of book is it?
- Who is the author/illustrator?
- Could you tell anything about the book before you started reading it? What were the clues?
- Who are the characters? Who do you like/ dislike? Why?
- What was your favourite part? Why?
- Would you recommend the story to a friend? What would you say to your friend about the book?

Interpreting

These questions encourage the children to infer and interpret information, events or ideas in a book and make links with their own experience and knowledge:

- Why did...?
- What does the author think about...?
- How did... react?
- How did...?
- What ideas are we given about...?

Predicting

These questions encourage the children to look at the structure and organisation of the text they are reading and think ahead and predict what might happen next:

- What is the purpose of...?
- How does the layout help...?
- Why are... used?
- Why are the words in bold print?

What do I write in the reading record?

The following list is not exhaustive but offers suggestions that may be appropriate:

- How enthusiastic is the child about the choice of book?
- Does the child read with fluency and expression?
- Does the child understand the words used in the text?
- Is the child confident to attempt new words?
- Is the child aware of punctuation?
- Can the child retell parts or all of the story?

Effective strategies to support children's thinking

Give time – make sure you have given the child enough time to respond. Wait for at least six seconds.

Delay – make sure the child has waited until you have finished your request.

Focus attention – make sure the child is looking towards you and listening to your request.

Repeat – repeat the request again, after sufficient waiting time.

Simplify – break your request down into parts or make it simpler.

e.g. instead of 'Before we go for lunch, we need to wash our hands' say 'First we'll wash our hands. Then we'll go to lunch.' The sequence of events is clearer.

Use questions to clarify – check the child understands by asking questions at a simple level first.

Focus on the feature – help the child focus on the feature they need to look at to be able to understand your question.

e.g. if asking how two items are alike, draw attention to relevant similarities, such as colour or size.

Forced alternatives – give the child two choices.

e.g. 'What is he doing? Is he running or jumping?'

Gesture – use gesture to help the child understand or to cue in to the correct answer.

Rephrase – repeat the request in a different way. Don't do this too quickly, since the child may still be processing the first request.

e.g. (1) 'Please could you pick up the litter from under your table?' (2) 'There is litter under the table. Please pick it up.'

Sentence completion – When asking questions that need a defined answer, model the response by beginning it, prompting the child to repeat how you start.

Adult: What colour is it? ... It is

Child: It is ... blue.

Adult: How many sides does the shape have? The shape has ...

Child: The shape has one, two, three, four ... five sides.

Demonstration – show the answer without talking and then ask again, while demonstrating.

e.g. 'What will happen if we put water in this broken cup?'

Experience the concept – help the child to experience the answer.

e.g. 'How does it feel? Let's touch it to see how it feels.'

Relate known to unknown – help the child to relate the request to previous experiences.

e.g. 'Let's touch the spaghetti. The spaghetti feels hard. How will it feel after it is cooked? Remember when we cooked the potatoes? How did they feel?'

Model thinking and comprehension monitoring

'That's a hard question. I need to think about that.'

'I've forgotten what you said. Can you say it again for me, please?'