

Learning to Read Beyond Phonics

12 Top Tips for Reading at Home

Utilising a mixture of methods to help your child learn to read is sometimes called a balanced approach. Why not try some of these suggestions to support your child with their reading?

Read a variety of books and texts with your child from an early age. Be open to their interests, but throw in some wildcards too!

For tricky words that just aren't sticking, create some flashcards with your child and practise them each day. If your child is part of the decision-making and creation process, they're more likely to be engaged in using the cards. Could you add a picture to the cards to help visualise each word?

When reading an unfamiliar word, ask your child if they can see any parts of the word that they already know. They might be familiar with a sound, a string of letters or even a whole word within a compound word.

While reading together, choose moments to stop and chat about what you've read so far. Ask your child to summarise what has happened and find out what they think about the story. Do they have any idea what might happen next?

Always read the blurb (usually on the back or the sleeve of the book) before you start. This will help establish a context for what your child is about to read.

If your child encounters an unfamiliar word, encourage them to think about what they have read so far. Are there any sentences or words that might give a clue as to what this unfamiliar word is?

Encourage your child to look carefully at the pictures on a page before jumping into reading the text. Ask them questions about the pictures to make sure they are noticing important details and visual cues.

Find groups of words containing strings of letters that all sound the same. For example, you might have 'knight', 'flight', 'bright' and 'alright' on a list. Your child could add to this list with other words they find that contain this pattern of letters.

Go through a short story and pick out all the words that use the same string of letters and rhyme. This works especially well with repetitive books that have a key phrase throughout.

Look closely at rhyming words. Do they have different letters making the same sound? Your child could group them accordingly.

Ask your child to think of a word that means the same thing that could replace a word in the text you're reading together. For example, the sentence might say, 'The fluffy kitten curled up on the mat.' Can your child replace the word 'fluffy' with something that means the same thing? How about 'mat'?

Decide on an action or sound for certain words in a story. For example, if your child reads the word 'clap', they could clap. If they read the word 'cat', they could meow. This can help engage your child with the text and also relates the word to its meaning, supporting reading comprehension skills.

We hope you find the information on our website and resources useful. As far as possible, the contents of this resource are reflective of current professional research. However, please be aware that every child is different and information can quickly become out of date. The information given here is intended for general guidance purposes only and may not apply to your specific situation.