



Department of
Education and Training

Raising a reader continues

Helping your child develop reading confidence



From the Minister

Reading is critical. It is one of the basic building blocks for your child's education. As parents/carers, many of us have memories of reading aloud to our young children. But how many of us continue to do this when our children are in upper primary school? Teachers often make the point to me that children of all ages love having books read to them. It can be a special bonding time – and for busy parents, reading together can be relaxing. It's a chance to spend time one on one with your child.

Reading aloud is just one of the practical tips in this booklet from literacy experts at the Department of Education and Training. The booklet contains a wealth of simple and practical ways to help your child develop their reading skills as part of everyday life at home. There are ideas to help switch on reluctant readers to books and ways to further support avid readers with their reading adventures.

I encourage you to keep this booklet handy so you can keep referring to it – and help your child get the best out of their upper primary years.

Dr Elizabeth Constable MLA
Minister for Education



Why reading is so important

So much in our life depends on reading – from simple (but very important) road signs to assembly instructions of kit projects and complicated contracts. Being able to read makes life safer and easier, and helps us learn more about a whole range of topics.

Reading also gives a lot of pleasure. It can take your child to new places – real or imaginary; excite them with clever stories of mystery; or show them events in history. You, as role models, can have a big impact on your child's love of reading. If they see how much you enjoy reading, they will expect to enjoy reading too.

Over time your child learns more about words and reading. With practice they start to recognise lots of common words, such as 'once', 'because' and 'mother', which help make reading easier. Reading is like a lot of things – the more we have a go at it, the better we get. As we get better, we are more likely to enjoy it.



Extra family fun

Want more ideas for fun with your child?

SMS 'happy' to 13 42 92 and we'll keep you updated with easy and fun tips.

You'll also be in the running to win a Nintendo Wii courtesy of Teachers Credit Union.

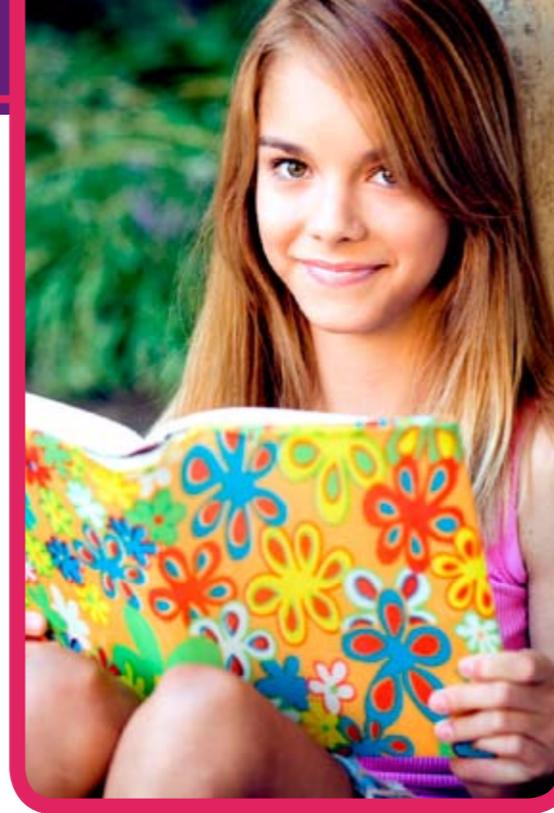
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Things you can do to help your child feel good about reading:

- Read to or with your child often.
- Make this time special, comfortable and fun.
- If you like to read as a family, sit together while reading and enjoy your books together. Show that you really like to read too.
- Show your child how we use reading for everyday things in our lives, for example, food labels, road maps and finding out how to treat a bee sting from a first aid book or the internet.
- Praise your child when they choose to read.

- Read letters, birthday cards and emails from friends and family with your child.
- Help your child choose books they want to read. This may include a wide range of topics from horses and silly humour to horror.
- Capture their interest by reading the first page or chapter to them and then letting them read the rest for themselves.
- Talk about the books you read – the stories and the characters. You might even be able to compare characters to people in real life.
- Talk about how to find information in different texts, for example using the index or looking at headings.
- Give them stick-on notes to mark tricky words to ask you about later.



What's happening in reading at school?

As your child progresses through primary school, their reading skills improve and the tasks they do at school change.

In Years 4 to 7 children read a wider range of texts for different purposes, for example information texts in science and society and environment.

Teachers continue to help children build on what they know as well as teach new skills with reading such as predicting, inferring and summarising. Children are taught how to research and take notes to help them find information about different topics.

You may want to help your child research a project or assignment but don't be tempted to do it yourself. That will not help your child learn.

These tips might be useful:

- Get your child to jot down questions on the topic such as *Where does it live? What does it look like?, How does it move? and What does it eat?* Then try to find the answers.
- Ask questions such as *Why?* and *Where?*
- Talk about how to present the project – a poster, booklet or model.
- Spend time with your child while they use the computer, giving tips and help when they need it.

Talk with your child about the many different reasons for reading, such as finding information, following medical instructions safely or simply for relaxation and pleasure.

Many books have been made into films or DVDs. It can be fun to read the book and watch the DVD together. Talk about differences you both notice, such as the characters being different or the setting not being what you expected.

Use newspapers too. Ask your child to find an interesting article or photograph and talk about it with you. See what else you can find out about the topic.

Keen readers

Some children become avid readers. They are happy to sit for hours and read – often well into the night.

They may argue that they need to read more than they need to sleep! They will read anything but often grow to like a certain author or series of books. Staff at your school library or public library can help your child find new books to read.

Avid readers often like to enter read-a-thons and competitions.

Try these ideas to support your keen reader:

- Read some of the books your child enjoys so you can talk about the stories and characters; share reactions to what happens in the stories.
- Meet a writer. Libraries often have authors visit during school holidays. Your library may also do something special during Children's Book Week in August each year.
- You might suggest that your child keeps a reading journal or that they share their books with like-minded friends.

Reluctant readers

Some children become reluctant or hesitant readers.

This may happen when a child thinks (or has been told) that they are not good at reading and so they lose confidence. As their confidence drops, they stop having a go because they worry about making mistakes. Soon they practise less, their progress slows down and they feel even less able to read. It can become stressful and not much fun.



It's much more fun for the reluctant reader if someone else reads the story instead. This allows them to relax and enjoy the story as it is read. There is no pressure to perform and the child does not feel embarrassed about reading slowly or making mistakes.

You might try some of these ideas to encourage your child to read:

- Find a quiet, relaxed place to read – perhaps in a big comfy chair or in bed.
- Make sure you are relaxed too. Set aside 'your special time' even if it is only five to 10 minutes. Quality wins over quantity every time!
- Turn off other distractions such as the television.
- Don't let other people stand around and watch.
- Take turns to read. You read the first paragraph and your child reads the next sentence or paragraph. Then it is your turn again and so on. After some days, you might find your child is reading bigger chunks.
- Read familiar books together where many words are known and repeated regularly.
- Let your child choose the book to read. It's fine if they choose a comic or magazine.
- Let them choose the same book again if they want to.

Some children may be quite capable readers but choose not to read because they can't find anything that really interests them and so reading becomes boring. Finding books to capture the interest of these reluctant readers is often quite hard.

It may help to try a wide range of topics and styles of writing. Comic books and joke books can be a good starting point. Factual books about strange things can trigger an interest. Humour, especially silly humour, can often get a reluctant reader hooked on reading.

When your child finds a book that is fun, interesting and exciting to read, look for other books by the same author.

Reluctant readers often like to make up their own story from picture books. They are most likely to choose a book to read from a small range of



books they know already. Usually they will choose shorter books. This is fine – just offer them something new every now and again.

You might find they are keen to draw a picture about a story or character they like. Perhaps they could think of a new adventure for their hero.

Help your child read aloud

Some children feel shy about reading aloud but hearing them read is the easiest way to know how their reading is progressing.

Let your child read to you when they are comfortable and relaxed. You can help your child feel good about reading aloud by praising their efforts and helping them work around tricky words in a cheerful, relaxed way.

Some of these ideas might help:

- Ask your child to read a short section at a time.
- Let them rehearse a section and then read it to you or another family member.
- Show them when to say a word loudly, for example when it is written in big letters or in italics.
- If your child makes a mistake and corrects the error, praise them for knowing it was wrong and making the change.

If your child comes to a word they don't know, use the 3 Ps:

- **Pause** and give time to work it out.
- **Prompt** them if they are stuck with a hint or a question, for example *How do you think the boy feels?*
- **Praise** their effort.

If they are likely to know the word, ask them to go back to the beginning of the sentence and have another go at it. Ask them to guess a word that starts with the same letter and would make sense.

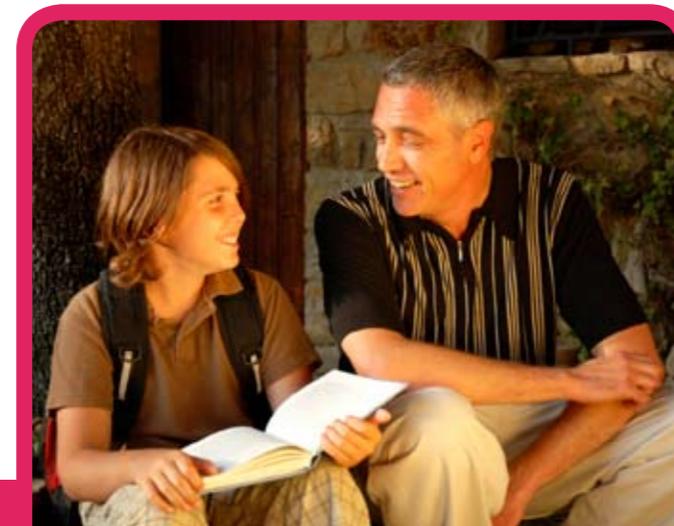
If your child says a word which does not make sense:

- wait, see if they correct it and then praise them if they do
- ask *Does that make sense?*
- ask a question that gives a clue, for example *Where would he go to catch the train?*

If your child cannot work out the word, say the word and go back later to look at it again. Ask your child to sound out the word, sound out chunks of the word, look at the words around it or check in a dictionary.

If your child makes a mistake but the word makes sense:

- do nothing; when your child has finished go back to the word and say *The word you said was _____; it made sense but it begins with __ so what do you think this word could be?*



Asking questions

It's great for your child to see that you are interested in their reading. You can be a part of all they read simply by talking with them about the books and asking a few questions about the stories.

Talk often with your child about books they have read or ones you have read together. Ask if the characters remind them of anyone they know. Ask what they think of a certain character or how an event makes them feel. This helps your child really get into the story and characters and also lets you see that they understand what they have read.

Asking different types of questions tells you more about what your child understands and infers from the story. It often gets you interested in the story as well.



Types of questions

There are three types of questions you can ask to find out what your child knows.

1. 'Right there' questions are when the information is right there in the author's words. Your child can find the answer to your question easily when you ask a 'right there' questions such as *What is the name of that dinosaur?*
2. 'Think and search' questions make your child think a bit more about what they have read. Your child may have to find the answer in more than one place in the story and 'put the answer together' before they can answer your question. For example, *What did the author mean?* When your child gets a new toy or game, ask your child to read the instructions or rules and then tell you how to play.

3. 'On my own' questions need your child to use things they already know as well as what was in the story to answer your question. For example *From what you've read, does that seem like a good idea?* Ask your child for their opinion about something to do with the story. The answer will not be in the words but they can use the general idea or message in the story. For example *What is your opinion of...?*



Games help make reading fun

There are many games where reading is part of the play.

Many board games such as Monopoly and Trivial Pursuit rely on reading the instructions, questions and answers.

Computer games are very popular and these also have instructions which need to be read, as play goes on, to progress to the next level.

There are also computer games that help improve reading. Your child may like to try some of the free games on sites such as schoolexpress.com/funtime.



Computers and reading

Families often use computers for lots of reasons such as shopping online, booking a holiday, finding a telephone number or doing some research.

Your child may enjoy using the computer to help their reading. Make sure the computer is facing into the room so you can read too and help your child when needed. Try some of these ideas:

- Write and receive emails.
- Research a sporting hero, favourite singer or a place to go on holiday.
- Find out about your culture, special foods and recipes.

Build a love of reading

There are lots of ways to help your child become a confident reader and grow to love reading.

You might like to try some of these ideas:

- Buy books and magazine subscriptions for gifts. Sports magazines can often inspire reading.
- Have lots of reading materials such as comics, magazines and information texts in the home and the car.
- Read the TV guide together and plan the programs you want to watch. Ask your child to read a movie review to you and discuss if it is one you both want to see.
- Have a special place in the home to keep books.
- Encourage your child to set aside time for reading.
- Do the same yourself.
- Exchange books with friends and other family members.
- Display your own books. Talk about the ones you like or dislike. Encourage your child to do the same.
- Visit a library often so your child has a greater choice of books.



How can I help my child?

There is a lot of research which shows children do better at school when their parents are involved. As a parent/carer, your partnership with the school is important.

Ask the teacher how you can help your child at home with reading.

Keep in touch with the school. Go to parent meetings and volunteer your time if you can.

If you think your child's teacher is doing a good job, why not tell them. Teaching can be challenging at times and it's great to be appreciated.



