



Department of
Education and Training

Raising a reader

Helping your child learn to read



For parents/carers of children in Kindergarten to Year 3

At home with your child in the early years of their life, you are their greatest role model and first teacher. You can help your child develop a love of learning before they start school.

One of the easiest and most valuable things you can do at home is to help your child enjoy books. Positive, happy experiences with reading before your child starts school make a big difference to how your child feels about learning to read at school as well as their success.

When children read at home with their family they learn that reading can generate memories and feelings, make them laugh or question the world around them, and tell them things they didn't know.

This booklet helps you support your child as they learn to read by sharing simple everyday activities together. The help you can give at home is really important and the difference families can make to a child's literacy learning is quite powerful.

I encourage you to keep this booklet within easy reach so you can refer to it again – and give your child a great start to school.

Dr Elizabeth Constable MLA
Minister for Education



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Using this booklet

This booklet is to help parents/carers of children in Kindergarten to Year 3 support their children at home while they are learning to read.

There are tips for making reading fun and interesting – not only when your child is reading to you but also when you are reading to your child.

You can read the whole booklet or just pick out the sections of most use to you. Try the Kids' Bestseller List (page 5) or look at the Quick Tips sections which show easy and fun ways to support your child's reading.

Quick Tips

- Encourage everyone in the family to read with your child – and ask visitors to read as well.
- Have lots of things to read at home or while travelling such as comics, magazines and information books.
- Talk about reading whenever possible.

Why it's so important to read with your child

- Reading and talking about stories are wonderful ways to show your child how enjoyable and important reading is – and a great way to spend time together.
- Reading with your child makes books and characters come alive.
- Reading helps your child learn that stories have a beginning, middle and end, and about sounds and patterns in words.
- Reading helps your child find out what kinds of stories they enjoy.
- Your child is more likely to read when they see you reading as well.
- Children who enjoy reading at home are more likely to be successful when learning to read at school.



“ It's never too early to start reading to your child. ”

Denise, mother, Palmyra

Getting in the mood for reading

- Set aside a special time for reading together. You just need 10 minutes each day where there are no distractions – and it doesn't matter what time of the day it is.
- Choose a special place to read where you're both relaxed and comfortable such as in bed or on a favourite couch – you could even get a special 'reading beanbag'.
- Home isn't the only place to read. Make an adventure of reading somewhere fun such as on the verandah, under a tree or in the local park.

Quick Tips

- Give books as presents.
- Write notes and put them under your child's pillow or dinner plate.
- Play board and computer games involving reading.

Choosing what to read

Encourage your child to choose the things you read together. Read things your child really enjoys and gets their attention – so they learn to love reading!

There are lots of things to read including:

- nursery rhymes
- story books
- factual books about world records, trivia and sports
- information books on dinosaurs or pets
- books you make together
- funny stories and poems
- riddles and jokes
- websites and book CDs
- movies and television shows that have been made into books
- newspapers, catalogues and magazines
- recipe books, street maps and dictionaries.



“Get older brothers
and sisters to read
to your child and
vice versa.”

Don, father, Palmyra.

Top 10 Kids' Bestseller List

Here's a top 10 list from the Department of Education and Training which recommends books to teachers and for school libraries. These books support the school curriculum and are popular with young readers. They are available in most bookshops and libraries.

1. **Hairy Maclary and Friends** by Lynley Dodd (ABC Books)
2. **Owl Babies** by Martin Waddell (Walker)
3. **Koala Lou** by Mem Fox (Penguin)
4. **Mr Gumpy's Outing** by John Birmingham (Red Fox)
5. **Who Sank the Boat?** by Pamela Allen (Thomas Nelson)
6. **Meerkat Mail** by Emily Gravett (Macmillan)
7. **We're Going on a Bear Hunt** by Michael Rosen and Helen Oxenbury (Walker)
8. **Wombat Goes Walkabout** by Michael Morpurgo (Collins)
9. **Annie's Chair** by Deborah Niland (Penguin)
10. **Diary of a Wombat** by Jackie French (Angus and Robertson)

There are reviews of children's books on the Department's website at det.wa.edu.au/education/cmis/eval/fiction/whichbook.

Make storytelling and reading fun

The way you read a story to your child can make a big difference to how much they enjoy it.

These ideas will help you make storytelling more fun and help your child learn to love reading. You can also use these ideas when your child reads to you.



Before reading

- Let your child pick the book and talk about why they chose it.
- Get your child to look through the book and tell you what it might be about.
- Point out the name of the writer and, if your child enjoys the book, suggest reading another book by the same author.
- If you are reading a long book over a few days, talk about what has happened so far in the story before you start the next time.

“Encourage your child to join in with words or phrases that are repeated throughout the story.”

Stephen, father, Halls Head



While reading

- Talk about what is happening in the pictures.
- Point out key words in the story and explain words your child might not know.
- Every now and then stop and ask What do you think will happen next? Accept the answer even if it's not quite right. You could ask What makes you think that?
- Occasionally ask some 'why' questions about the story, for example Why do you think the writer put that in the story?
- Answer your child's questions even if they interrupt the flow of the story.
- If your child has lost interest in a book, put it aside and choose a different one.

After reading

- Talk about the story and encourage your child to re-read parts they liked.
- Get your child to retell the story to you or another family member.
- Compare the people in the book with real people you know.
- Talk about the people, what happens and where it happens, for example Which was your favourite person? Where did the story take place?
- Talk about why the book was written and the messages in the story.
- In books with lots of facts, ask your child what they learnt, for example What did you find out about dinosaurs from this book?

What if I don't like to read aloud to my child?

- Talk about the pictures in a book and make up your own story to go with them.
- Visit your local library for children's storytelling sessions and borrow book CDs.
- Ask people you know who like reading to read to your child – they could be friends or family, including older brothers and sisters.
- Download talking books from the internet.

Early reading stages

Children usually go through several stages as they learn to read: the role play reader, the experimental reader and the early reader.

These pages can help you recognise these stages and support your child as they learn to read. Age ranges are included here to help you recognise the reading stages but are only a guide.

Role play readers (2–5 years old)

During the role play stage children take an interest in books and the writing they see in the world around them. They imitate things they see adult readers do, such as holding the book the right way up and turning the pages carefully. They often pretend to read by using the pictures and their memory to retell stories.

Support your child by:

- reading aloud to them as often as possible – this helps them learn about the value of books and expand their vocabulary
- encouraging and praising their attempts when they pretend to read
- looking at the illustrations and seeing how they help the story
- reading favourite stories again and again – familiarity builds confidence.

Experimental readers (3–5 years old)

Experimental readers often read by using pictures or their memory of the story. They may identify some words but are more focused on the meaning rather than reading every word in the right way.

Support your child by:

- encouraging them to ‘have a go’ at reading and praising them
- talking about who the people are and what happens in the books you read together
- encouraging them to express opinions about what happens in the story
- talking about the letters, sounds, words and interesting features in the things you read.



Early readers (5–7 years old)

Early readers confidently read books they know. When they read new books, they may read slowly and deliberately as they focus on the printed word, trying to read exactly what is on the page. Early readers will tell you what they think about the things they have read and why they think it.

Support your child by:

- reading to them as often as possible – early readers benefit from being read to
- encouraging them to talk about what happens in the story
- encouraging them to express an opinion about the things they read
- pointing out and talking about common words
- encouraging them to try different ways to work out a word they don't know – such as guessing using clues you give them, skipping the word and reading on to the end of the sentence and reading the sentence again
- encouraging them to talk about how they worked out a word they didn't know.



Encouraging a love of reading

It's really important to give your child lots of praise when they are learning to read.

Avoid criticising your child if they get something wrong – even if it seems easy to you. They are having a go and learning.

Some children need lots of practice and encouragement. When they struggle and start to lose confidence, remind them of other things they are good at, or things they love to do but had to practise to become better, such as riding a bike.

When you're praising them, tell them what they got right, for example I'm really proud of you for working out that word by yourself.

“Expose your children to books from an early age by having lots of books around the house.”

Melissa, Aboriginal mother, Girrawheen

If your child makes a mistake and corrects it:

- Praise them for correcting the word.

If your child comes to a word they don't know and pauses:

- Wait and give them time to work it out.
- If you think they 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 which begins with the same letter and would make sense.
- If you don't think they'd know the word, say it for them as soon as possible and encourage them to continue reading to keep the story going.

If your child says a word that doesn't make sense:

- Wait to see if they work it out for themselves and praise them if they do.
- If they don't correct the word, ask Does that make sense?
- If they're not likely to know the word, tell them what it is and encourage them to read on.
- At the end of the story, go back to the words they didn't know and help your child sound out individual sounds in the word.

If your child says a word which is incorrect although it makes sense:

- Do nothing until they have finished the sentence and then go back to the word and say You said this word was _____. It made sense but it's not the word written down. What else do you think it could be?
- You could also talk about the letters of the word with your child to see if they can think of other words that start with the same letter.

Quick Tips

- Write notes on a message board.
- Read catalogues that come in the mail and talk about the things you might buy.
- Make a special place to keep books to show the importance of reading.

Did you know?

Reading and play go together. Pretend games such as playing shop, school, garage, house and restaurant help children learn about words and how reading is used in everyday life.



Reading on the run

Whenever you can, read and talk about words and writing in everyday life. This helps children see how important reading is – that it's used all the time and for lots of different things.

- Write your shopping list with your child and get them to help you choose products in the shop by reading the labels.
- Cook together and get your child to read out the recipe.
- Look through the TV guide to decide on the programs you both want to watch.
- As you ride around in the car or bus talk about signs, logos and advertisements.
- Take a book to read while waiting for the doctor or dentist.
- Encourage your child to read and follow simple instructions on how to play their favourite games.
- Talk about and share the things you read, for example newspapers, catalogues, magazines, recipe books, street maps and dictionaries. Get your child to help you use these, for example Can you help me find Smith Street on the street map?

Using the library

Libraries are a treasure chest for young readers with book CDs, DVDs, videos and magazines as well as books.

They also have free internet access and special storytelling sessions for children. Find your local library at www.slwa.wa.gov.au and go to the "How do I find" tab.

Visiting the library is a great way to:

- encourage your child's reading and show them you value books and reading
- show your child all the different things to read
- involve the whole family in a regular activity
- look for their favourite authors and illustrators
- use resources that might not be available at home, such as computers
- join in library holiday activities.

Using computers

Some children are more interested in computers than books. Computers can't replace books and other types of reading but they can support your child's learning.

Many computer programs have activities that capture children's interest and allow them to practise reading in an enjoyable way. Spend time with your child while they use the computer and make sure they use it safely.

To practise reading on computers you and your child can read along with books on CD or search for information about favourite writers or topics of interest. You can write your own story, poem or riddle, adding pictures to illustrate them, perhaps searching for pictures on the internet.

“My grandkids like to look at the catalogues. They go through them and pick out what they'd like to buy.”

Wendy, grandmother, Girrawheen

Going online

Many websites have free interactive books and activities for children.

- www.memfox.com/mem-reads-aloud/ Hear popular Australian children's book author, Mem Fox, read her stories aloud.
- www.abc.net.au/children/jakers/stories/allnight/ An online audio storybook about pigs preparing for a fishing trip.
- Visit storynory.com for free online audio books. You might search for other sites.



If you would like to do more...

Your child's teacher is the best person to help you help your child learn to read.

The Better Beginnings program run by the State Library of WA offers support to parents of children up to three years old. Research shows that exposure to books and stories in the first few years of a child's life makes a real difference to their success in early literacy. Parents are encouraged to share books and stories with their babies and create lifelong links with libraries. Telephone 9427 2372 or visit www.better-beginnings.com.au.

What if my child struggles with reading?

If you think your child is having problems learning to read, speak with the teacher.

Teachers can explain how your child's reading is developing and work with you to support their progress. They can also let you know if you need to speak with other experts about your concerns.

What if my child has a disability?

Children with disabilities benefit from and enjoy the close interaction and stimulation provided when people read to them.

They learn in different ways and at different rates. You can use the information in this booklet to support your child when you read together.

Some children with different learning needs, physical disability, speech and language needs, vision or hearing impairment or high support needs may need special tools or equipment to help them learn to read. For example, books with enlarged print or in Braille, animated books, hearing devices and computer assisted learning programs.



What if my child speaks another language or dialect?

Children who are learning English as a second language or dialect need continued support in both their first language or dialect as well as in English.

When you read to your child in their first language or dialect, you help them learn words and grammar in their first language. They also learn about reading through a language they are familiar with.

Reading in your first language or dialect gives you the chance to work with your child without putting pressure on yourself to use English if you are not confident with it.

When children are learning to read in English, it's important to use the other clues on the page and in the book, and not just the words, to help make meaning.

Quick Tips

- Look at newspapers and magazines together and point out unusual words.
- Write new words your child learns on pieces of paper or card and keep to read again later.
- Get your child to look for letters they know in words, such as the letters in their name.

A quick checklist

Run through these reminders to see what else you can do to make reading at home more fun and rewarding.

1. Someone in the family reads with my child every day.
2. My child sees other members of the family reading at home.
3. We have a comfortable place to read and my child likes reading there.
4. When I read aloud to my child, I change my voice to show emotion and excitement or for different characters.
5. We read books of different lengths and topics to keep my child interested.
6. I pay attention to how my child responds to the story.
7. I stop reading if my child loses interest.
8. Ideas in the story can often be linked to things that happen in my child's life.
9. I encourage my child to talk about books