

## **Supporting Reluctant Readers**

### **Bedtime stories.**

Reading for pleasure starts with snuggly bedtime stories. There's no need to stop this daily ritual once children can read the words themselves. Listening to stories is a great way to nurture a love of books. It also helps a child to access interesting content above their reading level. As they get older, take it in turns to read a sentence, page or chapter each.

### **Read for a Purpose**

Mix reading with hands-on activities. From coding to origami, non-fiction books that give a clear sense of purpose are always a big hit, and can be enjoyed without the pressure to read them from cover to cover. Attention-grabbing content is vital – reluctant readers will abandon a book in seconds if they aren't hooked. Seek out non-fiction books that link to your child's existing passions, from fossils and football to snakes and space!

### **Make it Funny**

Subvert a traditional story – adding jokes and misinterpreting the pictures for comic effect. Hearing The Hungry Caterpillar be rude about his meals, or Cinderella joke about the prince's fashion sense, helps them associate books with laughing as well as learning. Luckily you don't have to improvise – there are LOADS of funny children's books out there. Some children will enjoy snot jokes and slapstick; others will like tales of naughtiness that turn familiar rules upside down.

### **eBooks**

Research found that eBooks make children keener, more confident readers, with the most potential to engage boys who don't enjoy reading. Look through the library of 250 free eBooks on Oxford Owl but if you are reluctant to add more screen time to the day, try graphic novels, poems, joke books or magazines and comics – bite-sized texts can be more appealing than a traditional book.

## **Supporting Struggling and Non-Confident Readers**

### **Keep anxiety levels down**

If your child is struggling, the most important thing is to keep anxiety levels down. Learning to read involves complicated skills, and these can soon go to pieces if a child gets worried. Even if your child is not worried about their reading, they will quickly notice your tense face or ever so slightly impatient voice – so breathe deeply, smile, find some funny books that you can both laugh at, and don't drag out reading sessions if they are stressful. Keep them short and sweet, and focus on sharing a book with your child rather than 'hearing' them read.

## **Make time to share books**

Try to set aside ten minutes a day to read together. Turn the television and the radio off to help your child focus. Always start a new book by looking through it together and talking about what it might be about – look at the cover, the contents page and the pictures. This kind of chat helps the child by giving them a sense of what's in the book before they start to read it, and preparing them for some of the words they will meet. This means you are setting them up for success right from the start.

When you are helping your child to choose a book, a good way to check the level is what's called the 'five finger test'. Open a page of the book and ask your child to put one finger up for every word they don't know. If all five fingers have been used up, the chances are that the book is too difficult.

Do let your child read favourite books over and over again if they want to. Research shows this will help them become more fluent readers. And let them read what most grabs their interest – comics, information books or text on websites can be just as valuable as stories.

## **Take turns to read**

Your child might want to read the whole book on their own, and that's fine if it isn't too difficult. But if it is a book that is a bit hard but still really interesting for them, or if they are lacking in confidence, it can be more fun if you and your child take turns to read. They might read one page and you the next. Or you can both read out loud together, pointing to the words as you go. The important thing is to keep the flow going and keep your child interested and enjoying what they are doing.

## **Build confidence**

Think back to what it was like when you were learning to drive or mastering a sport. There were probably times when you wanted to give up, so needed lots of encouragement. It's the same for reading; notice what your child has done well and tell them – often. You might say things like:

'You sounded that word out brilliantly, didn't you?'

'You noticed that word didn't make sense so you had another go. Well done!'

It is also important to react positively when your child is struggling or gets things wrong. You can make clear that mistakes are how we learn. So when your child is stuck, say things like:

'You've got a bit stuck – that's OK. What helped you last time this happened?'

'That's a hard one – good try. Let's say it together so you'll remember it next time.'

## **What to do when your child gets stuck**

The first thing to do is to wait and see if they can work it out by themselves. If they can't, you might want to just tell them the word, to keep the flow of reading going. Do this if they are looking really frustrated or losing interest. But at other times you can use simple prompts to help them, like reminding them to use their phonic knowledge to sound out the letters.

Sometimes, of course, none of this will work, because you've come to one of those many tricky English words that don't follow phonic rules – words like 'the', 'said', 'once' and 'was' where the letters don't make the sounds you'd expect them to. In this case you might encourage your child to sound out as much of the word as they can. Then tell them the word and get them to repeat it.

### **Reading Comprehension Test Tips**

- Read the text in its entirety first
- Read each question carefully and underline or highlight the answer in the text
- Check how many marks the question is worth, do you need to explain your answer?
- Always use the text to answer the questions, do not answer them from your own knowledge
- Re-read your answers to check they make sense

### **Spelling, Punctuation and Grammar Test Tips**

- Read each question twice, carefully.
- Underline or highlight the number of boxes that you are required to tick/match up
- Check how many marks the question is worth, do you need to do more than one thing?
- If you are asked to copy, ensure that you copy correctly
- If you are asked to insert a word into a sentence, choose a word that you are confident to spell – spelling errors mean no marks!
- Re-read your answers to check they make sense
- Put your hand up and ask for the question to be read. Children are allowed to do this in their End of Key Stage Assessments and we have found that it has really does give them some 'lightbulb moments'.