

General Description

Early readers confidently read familiar texts. When meeting new texts they may read slowly and deliberately as they focus on the printed word, trying to read exactly what is on the page. Early readers express and justify their own reactions to texts they have read or listened to.

How to Support Early Readers

Early readers will benefit from a range of experiences. Consider any of the following suggestions.

- Read to your child every day. Early readers benefit from hearing 'good' readers. This is also an opportunity to share and discuss information presented in texts.
- Encourage your child to choose texts to read on a daily basis.
- Expose your child to a wide variety of texts and give them encouragement to read new material, e.g. *books by a new author, a different type of text such as poetry.*
- Give encouragement and praise whenever your child chooses to read.
- Ensure your child sees other members of the family reading, and talking about their reading.
- Talk about characters, people, settings, plots and events in texts.
- Encourage your child to express their opinion about texts and to justify their reactions.
- Point out and discuss common words with your child.
- Encourage your child to try different ways to work out a word they don't know:
 - predicting (guessing using clues)
 - skipping the word and reading on to the end of the sentence
 - re-reading the sentence.
- Encourage your child to talk about how the meaning of an unknown word was worked out or could be worked out.



Encouraging Reading

To ensure that your child is encouraged to become a reader, consider the following questions:

- Is my child read to every day?
- Does my child see others reading at various times?
- Is a comfortable place provided where my child can be read to? Does my child like this 'space'?
- When reading aloud, is the tone of voice changed for different characters, or to show emotion and excitement?
- Are reading materials of varying length and subject matter chosen to capture my child's interest in what is being read?
- Is attention paid to how my child is responding to the text?
- Is the reading stopped when my child loses interest?
- Is the pace adjusted to fit the story, e.g. *slowing down and lowering voice during a suspenseful part*?
- Is my child given sufficient time to answer when questions are asked?
- Are ideas in the text linked with things that happen in my child's life?
- Is my child encouraged to discuss texts he or she has read and heard?
- Is my child encouraged to retell or act out stories he or she has heard?



Reading to and with Your Child

Continue to spend time every day reading to and with your child. Vary the type of books read, e.g. *short stories, poems, novels, informational texts*.

Things to do before reading

- Allow your child to select the text to be read and discuss the reasons for the selection.
- Encourage your child to look through the book and predict what it might be about.
- Point out the author's name and encourage your child to read other books by the same author, if they appeal.
- If you are reading a book as a serial, talk about what has happened so far in the story.

Things to do while reading

- Point out key words in the text and explain words your child may not know.
- Sometimes stop and ask "What do you think will happen next?" Accept the answer even though it may not seem right, perhaps asking, "What makes you think that?"
- Occasionally ask some 'why' questions about the story, e.g. "Why do you think the author put that bit in the story?"
- Answer the child's questions even if it interrupts the flow of the story.
- Talk about the illustrations to see if they match what is in the child's mind or your mind.
- Put aside a book if your child has lost interest and choose another.

Your child may want to read the book or sections of it along with you or even by him or herself. Encourage your child's reading even if it is not correct. Give plenty of praise and concentrate on all the things that are done correctly, not on the errors.

Things to do after reading

- Talk about the text and encourage your child to re-read parts either with you or alone.
- Encourage your child to retell the text to you or another family member.
- Compare characters from the book with real people the child knows.
- Talk about the characters, plot, setting and events of stories, e.g. "Which was your favourite character?" "Where did the story take place?"
- Discuss what was learnt from informational texts, e.g. "What did you find out about insects from this diagram?"
- Discuss the purpose of the text, e.g. "Why do you think the author wrote this book?"

Selecting Texts

Continue to encourage your child to select books to read by him or herself or for you to read. Encourage your child to read any book that captures his or her attention. This will help develop a love of reading.

Early readers may enjoy:

- reading books that were read aloud to them when they were younger
- 'how to' books with clear, simply worded instructions and supporting illustrations, e.g. *craft and recipe books*
- fact books about world records, trivia or sports
- informational books on any subject of interest
- tales with humorous exaggeration
- stories that show young people actively solving problems and overcoming odds
- CD-ROMS, Internet sites, book and audio tape sets, book versions of videos, films or television shows.



Using Everyday Print

Whenever possible, read and talk about print that is used in everyday lives. This helps children see how reading is used on a daily basis for many different purposes.

- Look at the television guide with your child and decide on the programs to be watched.
- Buy your child games and toys that provide simple instructions to be read and followed.
- Investigate CD-ROMS that provide a different type of text for children to read and follow.
- Talk about signs, logos and advertisements as you go about daily trips.
- Discuss the labels on packaging, e.g. *“What does it say on the cereal box?”*
- Talk about and share the texts that you read, e.g. *newspapers, magazines, recipe books, street maps, dictionaries*. Have your child help you use these when possible, e.g. *“Can you help me find Smith Street in the directory?”*

Reading and Writing Links

Encourage your child to be involved in writing as often as possible. Focus on the meaning of the message and don't be overly concerned with errors. It is inevitable that children will make mistakes as they are learning about the English spelling system. When your child is more confident, encourage them to look at any misspelled words and see if they can 'have another go' at writing the word.

Encourage your child to do any of the following.

- Write messages, letters and postcards to other family members.
- Make cards and invitations for special occasions e.g. *birthday parties*. Use stamps, stickers or cut-outs to decorate them and have your child write the message.
- Keep a diary or journal when you go on a trip or holidays. This is especially valuable if you are travelling and your child is missing school. Collect printed materials such as brochures, leaflets and tourist guides to include in the journal.
- Assist you to write the weekly shopping list.
- Help compile lists for a particular purpose, e.g. *birthday presents wanted, people to attend a party*.
- Give a diary, birthday book or notebook to a friend as a present.
- Make a 'How to' book on an area of special interest, e.g. *How to Build a Hen House*. Have your child read it to another person.



Developing Word and Text Knowledge

Early readers need to continue to develop instant recognition of words commonly found in written texts, e.g. *because, their, since*. This will help your child to read more fluently. (Ask the teacher if you are unsure of which words are being learnt.)

Point out these common words whenever possible, e.g. *on signs, in the newspaper, after reading a book*.

Play games using these words so your child gets to use and see them often, e.g. *Tic Tac Toe, Concentration*.

When talking about words, draw attention to how the same sound can be made using different letters, e.g. *the 'e' sound is spelled differently in bee, beach, me, niece*. Ask your child to see if they can find any other words where the 'e' sound is spelled in a different way. You can do the same for other sounds if and when the time is appropriate.

As well as talking about words, talk to your child about some of the punctuation in a book you or they are reading. Talk about how the punctuation can affect the reading of a story, e.g.

Use of exclamation marks – Run! Run!

Use of question marks – Where are we going?

Use of speech marks – "Help me!" cried Mrs Smith.



Supporting Oral Reading

If your child makes a mistake and corrects the error ...	If your child comes to a word they don't know and pauses ...	If your child makes a mistake which does not make sense ...	If your child makes a mistake which does make sense ...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer praise or support for making the correction. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wait and give them time to work it out. • If they're successful, encourage them to read on to maintain meaning. • 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 which begins with the same letter and would make sense. • Ask a question which will give a clue to the meaning, e.g. <i>"How do you think Johnny feels? Angry?"</i> • If the word is not likely to be known, say it quickly and encourage them to keep reading to maintain fluency and avoid loss of meaning. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wait to see if they work it out for themselves and offer praise if they do. • If they don't correct the word themselves ask, <i>"Does that make sense?"</i> • Ask a question which will give a clue to what the word is, e.g. <i>"Where will he go to catch the train?"</i> • If the word is not likely to be known, say it quickly and encourage the child to read on. Later, when the whole text has been read, go back to unknown words and help your child use other word-identification strategies such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – sounding out individual sounds in a word – sounding out chunks of words, e.g. <i>base</i> or <i>root of the word, prefixes and suffixes</i> – looking at the words around it. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do nothing until the child has finished. • When they have finished go back to the word and say <i>"You said this word was ____; it made sense but it begins (or ends) with the letter __ so what do you think it could be?"</i> • You may wish to discuss the letters of the word with your child and see if they can think of any other words with similar letters.

Understanding How Texts Are Read and Organised

Literary and informational texts are read in different ways because the purpose for reading them is often different. Consider the following:

	Literary	Informational
Examples of Texts	stories, novels, plays, poems, songs	newspapers, magazines, textbooks, instructions, bibliographies
Purpose	Read for entertainment, enjoyment or appreciation.	Read for information and enjoyment.
How the Text Is Read	From start to finish. Read the entire book. Usually the meaning comes from print.	Begin anywhere in the material. May read only part of it. Read the charts, tables, graphs, diagrams and photographs as well as the print.
Rate of Reading	Read fairly quickly.	Read at a varying speed — depending on how familiar your child is with the words and topic.

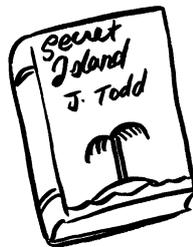
Helping your child to understand the way texts are organised will help them locate and understand the information.

- Ask your child to predict what the book is about from the cover, title, illustrations and diagrams.
- Discuss how the index and table of contents might help them find specific information.
- Help your child look quickly through a section of a chapter to further narrow their search for specific information.
- Help your child to read and understand all things on a page such as:
 - bold and italic print
 - captions and explanations under the pictures and photos
 - diagrams and labels
 - charts, tables and graphs.
- Encourage your child to use the glossary at the back to help understand the meaning of the special words used in the text.

Building a Love of Reading

There are many ways to encourage your child to be a reader and for them to develop a love of reading. Try any of the following suggestions.

- Give books as presents.
- Have a selection of reading materials such as comics, magazines and informational texts available at home or when travelling.
- Have a special place for each person in the family to keep their books.
- Set aside a time for reading.
- Encourage all family members and visitors to the home to participate in reading or being read to.
- Encourage your child to select his or her own books.
- Have a family subscription to a magazine, e.g. *Time*.
- Encourage your child to exchange books with friends and other family members.
- Talk about books whenever possible.
- Display your own collection of books. Discuss why you liked or disliked any of the books.



Supporting Comprehension

Talking to your child about what he or she has been reading or what you have been reading together is a wonderful opportunity to make connections with his or her life, talk about opinions and to understand what the text is about. Asking questions is one way your child can respond to texts to show they understand. Different types of questions will provide more information about your child's understanding of the text.

'Right There' (Literal) Questions

These questions focus on what the author said and usually require the child to remember specific information, e.g. *events, characters, main ideas*. It is helpful to follow up these types of questions with "How did you know that?" or "Can you show me where it says that?"

'Think and Search' (Inferential) Questions

The answers to these questions can be found in the text but not necessarily in the one place. The child has to 'put the answer together' from various sections or sentences in the text, e.g. "*Why do you think ... behaved in that way?*" These questions are sometimes the *how* and *why* questions.

'Author and Me' (Interpretive) Questions

These questions require the child to base the answer on the text but also draw on what they know to reach an answer. To answer these questions the child needs to have read the text, as the answers are not wild guesses, e.g. "*The author has saidwhat does she mean by that?*"

'On My Own' (Critical or Evaluative) Questions

These questions go beyond the text, asking for the child's own opinions or judgements. The answers are not in the text at all. The text provides a starting point for discussions about the underlying messages, e.g. "*I wonder why the fairy godmother stopped her magic at midnight?*"

It is not necessary to ask each type of question every time a text is read. Sometimes your child will stop and ask you questions, and other times you may ask the questions and direct your child's attention to specific things in the text. This should always be a fun way to explore the text and to stimulate discussions, not a time when the child feels 'tested' or 'interrogated'.

Using Computers

Computers can't replace reading but they can support what your child is learning. Many computer programs (also called software) offer activities that can grab your child's interest, enable reading skills to be practised, and provide enjoyment. It is also valuable if you spend time with your child while they are using the computer.

By accessing and using computer software and the Internet your child can:

- practise their reading skills by reading along with what is on the screen
- play with objects and characters on the screen
- read along with books on CD-ROMS
- search for information about their favourite authors or topics of interest
- write their own texts
- add diagrams and illustrations to their own pieces of work
- make and print their own books
- gain praise and see improvement in language abilities.

Note: By searching the Web, you can find sites that have free interactive books and literacy activities that your child might enjoy.

Early Readers may also need to access the Internet to complete research work. You can best support your child in these investigations by guiding, advising and talking things through with them.

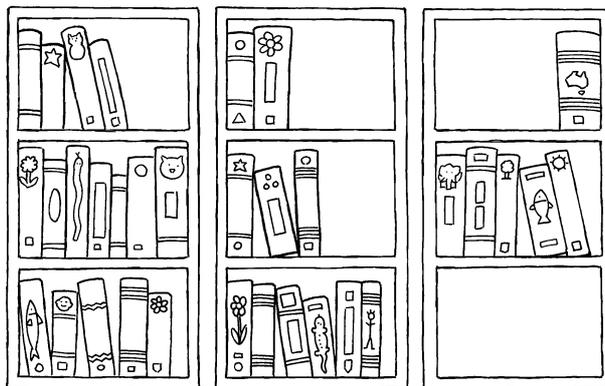
As a parent you can:

- help to find appropriate information by providing access to the Internet
- encourage your child to jot down questions about the topic
- help your child decide which pieces of information will be most useful
- help your child search for more information
- talk about the best way to present research work, e.g. *poster, tape recording, booklet.*

Using the Library

Visiting the library is a great way to:

- encourage your child’s reading
 - show them that you value books and reading
 - provide a source of information for research work, including the Internet.
- Make library visits a regular activity with all the family members being involved.
 - Introduce your child to the librarian. Ask the librarian to explain how she or he can help your child.
 - Get a library card for yourself, your child and other family members.
 - Explain and point out how the library is organised into sections such as fiction, informational and reference books.
 - Help your child hunt for books on a particular topic or by a particular author using the cataloguing system or computers.
 - Share your favourite authors and illustrators. Explain why you like their work. Ask your child about their favourite authors and illustrators.
 - Set aside time to use resources that may not be available at home, such as computers.



Supporting Graphophonic and Word Knowledge Through Games

Puzzles

Puzzles provide opportunities for your child to investigate both the structure and meaning of words. There are many commercially produced publications (including software packages) incorporating puzzles such as crosswords and word sleuths, and others that involve creating words, finding small words inside larger words and rhyming activities.

Odd One Out

Odd One Out assists your child to identify words or parts of words that vary. A series of four words is presented. Three of the words have something in common. The fourth will be the 'odd one out'. Your child needs to select the odd one and suggest why it does not fit.

Depending on the words chosen, this activity can be used in many different ways:

Number of Syllables – “Listen while I say four words: *donkey, giraffe, elephant, tiger*. Tell me which one doesn't have two syllables.”

Rhyming – “Listen while I say four words: *near, fear, hear, giant*. Tell me which one doesn't rhyme.”

Matching Sounds – “Listen while I say four words: *receive, seal, bee, float*. Tell me which one has a different middle sound.”

As an extension of this activity, do not give the criteria and ask your child to pick the odd one out. For example, “Listen while I say four words: *rough, enough, tough, three*. Which does not belong?”

When you first begin this activity, make sure the words differ in only one aspect as this makes it easier for your child to identify the difference.

Tic Tac Toe

Tic Tac Toe is played in the same way as Noughts and Crosses. However, specified letters, patterns or words are used to create a sequence of three diagonally, up or down, instead of noughts and crosses. For example, you may write words that have an /e/ sound and your child may have to write words beginning with 'thr'.

see	throb	beach
	throw	
threw		key

If your child is having difficulty thinking of words to add, you could both make a list of words prior to beginning Tic Tac Toe.

Supporting Graphophonic and Word Knowledge Through Games

What Comes Next?

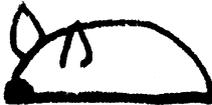
What Comes Next? is an adaptation of what was known as the game Hangman. However, in What Comes Next? your child is required to guess the letters in the correct order.

- Choose a word from something your child has read. Make a dash for each letter in the word.
- Give your child a clue to help them guess the first letter, e.g. *the first letter is between A and C in the alphabet.*
- Allow your child to guess the letter.
- As your child guesses the next letter, a guess that could be a correct English letter sequence is written on the left, e.g. *ba, bi.*
- Those that could not be a correct English letter sequence are written on the right as single letters, e.g. *t, b* — not modelling incorrect letter patterns, e.g. *bt, betk.*
- A penalty is only given for guesses that could not be correct. When your child guesses a letter that couldn't be right, a segment of the mouse is drawn.
- Have your child continue to guess the letters in order until all letters are written.
- The game ends if the drawing is completed before the word is completed.

WHAT COMES NEXT?

b e c _ _ _ _ _

<p>COULD BE</p> <p>t ba bet beck</p>	<p>COULDN'T BE</p> <p>t b</p>
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(The word is because.)

Word Searches

Early Readers enjoy the challenge of searching for particular words in magazines, the environment and newspapers. With your child, choose 4 or 5 words to find over a given time. Have your child keep a record of the number of times they find the word and where it was found. You can make this into a personal competition where the child tries to find more of the next word, e.g. *"I found 'because' 20 times last week and I found 'and' 30 times this week."* They might like to share their findings at school with the teacher and peers.