



Lawn Primary and Nursery School

Parent Advice Sheet

Supporting a Child Who Finds Reading Difficult

Reading can be a challenge for many children, but with the right strategies, it is possible to improve.

The English language is tricky and there have been lots of influences on our language. There are rules and then exceptions to the rules, there are letters or groups of letters which represent different sounds in different words and there are many words that cannot be spelt using our phonics code.

The sounds we hear are called phonemes and the sounds we write are called graphemes. Some phonemes can be represented by many different graphemes eg the sound “s” can be written as s, c, ce, se or ss.

Below are some fun and effective suggestions that can help your child become more confident and successful in their reading journey:

Remember it is always worth getting your child’s eyes tested to ensure they can see well.

1. Create a Positive Reading Environment

- **Set a calm, quiet space** for reading, free from distractions.
- **Read aloud together:** Take turns reading sentences or paragraphs.
- **Praise efforts:** not just successes: Encourage persistence and celebrate small wins.
- **Together:** Set time aside when the whole family sits down together to read. Make it fun eg have a hot chocolate or an ice-lolly. Use a timer to show how long everyone is reading for – extend the time as child gets older.
- **Library :** Visit the local library often and get a range of books.
- **Range of books :** Encourage your child to read stories, poems, information books, lists, comics, magazines and even cereal packets!

2. Use Multisensory Techniques

- **Read with finger tracking:** Have the child use their finger to follow the words as they read, which can help improve focus. Some children benefit using a bookmark or card to help them keep their space.
- **Reading window :** Some children benefit from a piece of card cut so that they only see one word or short phrase at a time – a whole paragraph can be over-facing.
- **Overlays :** Coloured overlays help some children as they can reduce the glare of the page. Ensure the lighting is not too bright or too dim. Ensure you have had your child’s eyesight checked.
- **Incorporate audio books:** Listening to a story while following along in the book helps connect spoken and written language.
- **Use visual aids:** Picture books, charts, or diagrams can make abstract concepts more tangible. Discuss the pictures and the events of the story.

3. Break Down Reading into Small Steps

- **Start with short, simple books** that match their reading level.
- **Focus on one skill at a time:** For example, first practice recognising sight words, then work on sounding out new words.
- **Pause after reading a page** to talk about what was read and check for understanding.

4. Help with Phonics and Word Recognition

- **Practice letter sounds and blending:** Spend time practicing phonics regularly. Ensure you are using the phonics we use at school – ask the teacher for a sound mat or a link to the Read Write Inc sounds.
- **Use flashcards** for high-frequency words (sight words) that don't follow typical phonetic patterns.
- **Word families:** Group words that share common sounds or endings (e.g., cat, bat, hat, sat) to build recognition and confidence.

5. Use Interactive Reading Activities

- **Echo reading:** You read a sentence or section first, and then the child repeats it after you. See this [Echo Reading link](#).
- **Paired reading:** Read a part together at the same time, which helps with confidence. Let the child give you a sign when they are happy to carry on alone, then jump in again if they come to a word that they find tricky.

Paired reading is also a helpful approach to support reading practice at home.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j80MHkyIIFs> is a YouTube clip showing how pairs read at the same time. The clip is very short but demonstrates the method well.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rR8LWdDEZkY> is a longer YouTube clip put together by an Educational Psychologist which outlines all aspects of the technique.

- **Use games:** Play word puzzles, rhyming games, or letter recognition games.
- **Environmental Text :** Encourage you child to read signs in shops, words on packets and road names etc

6. Encourage Regular Reading Practice

- **Set aside a regular reading time:** Even 10-15 minutes a day can make a big difference. Create a reading plan and tick each one completed – work towards a reward or goal.
- **Read a variety of texts:** Include comics, graphic novels, informational books, or poems to keep things interesting.
- **Read aloud every day:** Be sure to read stories to your child even if they are struggling to read on their own.
- **Punctuation :** Read the punctuation. This can mean you actually say full stop when there is one for example. This can then help them use them in their writing. Or it may just mean pausing at a full stop to model the need for this, changing your voice when there are inverted commas, or modelling whispering if after some speech it details she whispered.

7. Support Comprehension Skills

- **Ask questions** before, during, and after reading to check understanding.
- **Use visuals:** Have the child draw pictures or make a mind map about what they've read.

- **Summarize together:** After reading, ask the child to tell you what happened in their own words.
- **Make Predictions :** Guess what will happen next.
- **Encourage inference :** What do they know that has not been actually written. Eg if the character has just put on a coat, hat and scarf we can presume it is cold and probably not the Summer.

8. Adjust the Reading Level

- **Use books at the right level:** Too difficult can cause frustration, too easy might not challenge them enough.
- **Gradually increase complexity:** Move to harder books only when the child feels confident in their current reading level.
- **Range :** Read a range of books and try to tap into their interests. Try to find a particular author or series that they really enjoy.
- **Barrington Stoke :** This is a range of reading books specifically designed for children with reading difficulties.

9. Model Reading Behaviour

- **Read aloud to your child:** This models fluent reading and exposes them to different vocabulary and sentence structures.
- **Show enthusiasm for books:** Share your excitement about reading and books to model a love of reading.
- **Discuss books:** Share what you enjoy about books, characters, and stories to deepen their interest.

10. Use Technology

- **Reading apps and websites:** Many apps help children learn to read through games and interactive exercises.
- **Interactive e-books:** These often highlight text as it's read aloud, helping with word recognition and pronunciation. You can often change the font and the size, sometimes the background which can help.
- **Subtitles :** Have the subtitles on when your child is watching TV.
- **Audio books :** Listen to audio books regularly.
- **Dolphin Easy Reader :** Download the Dolphin Easy Reader app which supports accessibility to books for anyone with a print related disability.
- **RNIB Bookshare :** Explore accessing a RNIB Bookshare account. You can pair this account with the Dolphin Easy Reader app to support wider reading.
- **Immersive Reader :** Experiment with using immersive reader to support with reading tasks. This software can read and track the text, allowing your child to revisit and relisten to pieces of text which should support comprehension.
- **IPAD :** Explore accessibility features on the iPad to support wider reading.

11. Encourage Patience and Persistence

- **Avoid pressure:** Reading should feel fun, not like a chore.
- **Offer regular breaks:** If frustration arises, take a short break and return to the activity with a fresh perspective.
- **Set achievable goals:** Celebrate progress, even if it's just reading a few pages or learning a new word.

Remember: Every child is unique, and it may take time to find the right combination of strategies that work for them.

Keep the process positive and celebrate even the smallest improvements!

Read to your child lots and listen to them read lots!