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Reading: Light up your child's imagination



Department of
Education

Activities and fun ideas that help your children develop reading skills at home. A guide for parents/carers with children in Kindergarten to Year 2.

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TITLE: Reading: Light up your child's imagination: Activities and fun ideas that help your children develop reading skills at home. A guide for parents/carers with children in Kindergarten to Year 2.

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From the Minister

We know the more involved you are in your children's learning in the early years, the happier and more confident they are at school.

One of the easiest and most valuable things you can do is to help your children develop a love of reading.

Reading is not only fun, it is also an essential life skill that helps children succeed at school and learn about the world around them. It builds imagination and creativity, and opens up children's minds.

This booklet is designed to make reading enjoyable for you and your children. It includes ideas you can use in your everyday life at home and when you are out and about. These simple activities have been developed specially for busy families.

As you use this booklet, you are helping to build your children's confidence and skills in reading.

Hon Peter Collier MLC
Minister For Education



Reading is fun!

Reading and talking about stories are wonderful ways to show your children how enjoyable and important reading is – and it's a great way to spend time together.

Reading with your children:

- helps them learn that stories have a beginning, middle and end
- helps them learn about sounds and patterns in words
- makes books and characters come alive
- helps them find out what kinds of stories they enjoy.

You can help your children develop a love of books by reading to them from an early age. The experiences they share with you at home will continue to build on what they learn at school.

This booklet contains many ideas to make reading fun and interesting, whether you are reading to your child or they are reading to you.



Quick tips

- Encourage everyone in the family to read with your children – and ask visitors to read as well.
- Have lots of things to read at home or while you are out and about (for example in the car or on the bus or train) such as comics, magazines and information books.
- There are many other ways you can help your children learn to read, for example you can play computer adventure games, download tablet applications and download online booklets. When playing computer games ask questions such as: *What level are you on? What is the name of the character that you are playing?*
- Talk about reading whenever possible.
- Why not try to write a story, poem or riddle together. You can add the pictures and illustrations after you have finished the book.

Reading stages

Children usually go through three reading stages as they learn. You can help and support your children during each of these stages with some of the techniques listed below.

Please be aware that these are guides only – each child learns at their own pace.

Role-play readers

During the role play stage children take an interest in books and the writing they see around them every day. They start to imitate you, such as holding a 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.

You can support your children by:

- reading aloud as often as possible to help them learn how important reading is
- reading aloud to them to expand their use of words
- 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

When children progress to the experimental reader stage, they 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.

You can support your children by:

- encouraging them to 'have a go' at reading and praising them continually
- talking with them about the characters and story line
- encouraging them to express opinions about what happens in the story
- talking about the letters, sounds, words and interesting features in the books and other things you read.



Early readers

Early readers are able to read books they know confidently. 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. Children also begin to tell you what they think about the things they have read and why they think it.

You can support your children by:

- reading to them as often as possible to help them develop their reading skills
- 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, sounding the word out, 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.



Quick tips

There are many online programs that have activities that capture children's interest and allow them to practise reading in an enjoyable way.

Try **betterbeginnings.com.au**,
readingeggs.com.au and
bookadventure.com.

Getting in the mood for reading

Children who enjoy reading at home are more likely to be successful when they learn to read at school.

Encouraging a love of reading in your children can be as simple as:

- setting up a special reading time – 10 minutes each day is all it takes
- avoiding distractions, for example turn the television off
- choosing a special place to read where both of you can relax and be comfortable.

Before you begin reading:

- get your child to look through the book and tell you what it might be about
- talk about what has happened so far in the story if you are reading a long book over a few days.

Home isn't the only place to read. Make an adventure of reading somewhere fun such as on the verandah, under a tree, in the local park and at the library.

Quick tips

- Write notes on a message board for your children to read.
- Read catalogues that come in the mail together and talk about the things you might buy.
- Make a special place to keep books for you and your child to show how important reading is.

Reading together

While reading with your children:

- talk about what is happening in the pictures
- point out key words in the story and explain words your children might not know
- every now and then stop and ask: *What do you think will happen next?* and *What makes you think that?*; accept their answer even if they are not quite right
- answer your children's questions even if it interrupts the flow of the story
- encourage your children to join in with words or phrases repeated throughout the story
- occasionally ask some 'why' questions about the story, for example: *Why do you think the writer put that in the story?*

After you have finished reading with your children:

- talk about the story and encourage your children to re-read parts they liked
- get them to retell the story to you or another family member
- compare the characters in the book with real people you know
- talk about what happens and where it happens, for example: *Who was your favourite person?* and *Where did the story take place?*
- talk about why the book was written and the messages in the story
- ask them what they learnt if the book contains lots of facts, for example: *What did you find out about dinosaurs from this book?*
- point out the name of the writer and, if your children enjoyed the book, suggest reading another book by the same writer.



Quick tips

If you do not have a computer at home you can visit your local library where most have free computer and internet access.

You can do things like read along with audio books on CDs and search for information about your children's favourite authors or topics of interest.

If you don't like reading aloud to your children:

- talk about the pictures in the book and make up your own story to go with them
- visit your local library for children's storytelling sessions
- borrow audio books
- ask friends and family who like reading aloud to read to your children
- download audio books from the internet – your local library may have access to the internet if you don't at home.

Quick ideas:

- Give books as presents.
- Write notes and put them under your children's pillow or dinner plate for them to read.
- Play board and computer games involving reading.
- Look at newspapers and magazines together and point out unusual words.
- Write new words your children learn on pieces of paper and keep them to read again later.
- Get your children to look for letters they know in words, such as the letters in their name.

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
- comic books
- movies and television shows that have been made into books
- newspapers, catalogues and magazines
- recipe books, street maps and dictionaries.



Encourage your children to choose the books they want to read. Read things your children really enjoy – so they learn to love reading!



Encouraging a love of reading

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

Praise them when they try to read a book. Avoid criticising if they get something wrong, even if it seems easy to you. Some children need lots of practise and encouragement.

If your children begin to struggle and lose confidence, remind them of other things they are good at or things they love to do but had to do a lot of practise to become better, such as riding a bike.

When praising them, tell them what they got right, for example: *I'm really proud of you for working out that word by yourself.* If they make a mistake and correct it themselves, praise them for correcting it.

Following are some techniques you can use when you are sitting down with your children to read.

If they come to a word they don't know and pause:

- 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
- ask them to look at the beginning of the word and guess a word that would make sense
- if you don't think they'd know the word, say it for them and encourage them to continue reading to keep the story going.

If they say 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, say it for them and encourage them to continue reading to keep the story going
- at the end of the story, go back to the words they didn't know and help them sound out individual sounds in the word.

If they say a word which is incorrect but it makes sense as part of the sentence:

- ask them to have a go at sounding out the word
- 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?*

Quick tips

Many websites have free interactive books and activities for children.

Hear popular Australian children's book author, Mem Fox read her stories aloud at memfox.net. For free online audio books visit storynory.com.

Reading on the run

Whenever you can, read and talk about words and writing with your children every day. This helps them see how important reading is and that it is used all the time and for lots of different things.

When shopping, have a list ready and ask your children to match the names of items to your shopping list. Other examples include:

- when cooking together, ask your children to read the recipe
- when looking through the television guide, decide together on the programs to watch
- in the car, talk about signs or advertisements and what they say
- take a book to read while waiting for the doctor or dentist.

Using the library

Libraries are a treasure chest for young readers with a wide range of books, CDs, DVDs, videos and magazines.

Libraries also have special storytelling sessions for children. To find your local library and times for storytelling sessions visit slwa.wa.gov.au.

Visiting your local library is a great way to:

- encourage your children's learning by showing them how much you value books and reading
- show your children all the different things they can read like comics and books
- involve the whole family in regular reading activities
- look for your children's favourite authors and illustrators
- use resources that might not be available at home, such as computers
- join in holiday activities.

Get older brothers and sisters to read to their younger siblings and vice versa.



Other information

What if I want to do more?

Your children's teachers are highly regarded by the school and the school community. Each teacher is an expert in early childhood education and is skilled in recognising where your children are excelling and where additional work may be required. It is highly recommended you speak with your children's teachers regularly as they are the best people to help you help your children learn and excel.

What if my children struggle with reading?

If you think your children are having problems learning to read, speak with their teachers.

They can explain how your children'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 disability benefit from and enjoy the close interaction and stimulation provided when people read to them. 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. Some examples include books with enlarged print or in Braille, animated books, hearing devices and computer assisted learning programs.

Can't get enough of reading?
 Register for this year's Premier Summer Reading Challenge (in support of the Multiple Sclerosis Society of WA). It is a great way to keep up your child's enthusiasm for reading over the long summer holiday. Register at det.wa.edu.au/readingchallenge.



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

What if my children speak another language or dialect?

Children who speak English as an additional language or dialect need continued support in both their first language and dialect as well as in English. You can help your children learn to read and recognise words by helping them to learn to read in their first language.

Reading in your first language or dialect also gives you the chance to work with your children 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 not just the words, to help make meaning, for example use the pictures on the page to help tell the story.

Top 10 kids' bestseller list

There are a number of books that are very popular with young readers. We have listed our top 10 favourites for you to get started. You may be able to borrow them from the school library or you can get them in your local library.

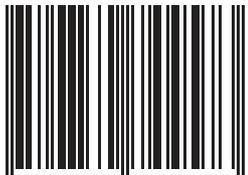
1. **Hairy Maclary and Friends** by Lynley Dodd (ABC Books)
2. **Owl Babies** by Martin Waddell (Walker)
3. **Koala Lou** by Mem Fox (Penguin)
4. **Mr Gumpy's Outing** by John Burningham (Red Fox)
5. **Who Sank the Boat?** by Pamela Allen (Thomas Nelson)
6. **Meerkat Mail** by Emily Gravett (Macmillan)
7. **We're Going on a Bear Hunt** by Michael Rosen and Helen Oxenburg (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)



Make storytelling and reading fun! The way you read a story to your children can make a big difference to how much they enjoy it, for example making sounds of the different animals in the book or changing your voice for different characters in the book.

W: det.wa.edu.au/schoolsandyou

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