



Reading at Home – A Guide for Parents



Reading at home plays a vital role in supporting your child's language development, confidence and enjoyment of books. Research consistently shows that children who read regularly with an adult develop stronger vocabulary, comprehension and a more positive attitude towards learning.

This guide offers practical, age-appropriate advice for supporting reading at home, broken down by EYFS, KS1 and KS2.

Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)

What reading looks like at this stage:

In EYFS, reading is about communication, enjoyment and familiarity with language. Children are learning to tune into sounds, recognise patterns and develop a love of stories.

At this stage, talking about books and enjoying stories is more important than reading words independently.

Best practice at home

1. Read aloud every day

Share picture books, rhymes and simple stories daily.

Re-reading favourites is powerful – repetition builds language and confidence.

2. Talk about the pictures

Ask open questions: "What can you see?", "What do you think will happen next?"

Encourage your child to point, name objects and describe actions.

3. Play with sounds

Sing nursery rhymes and songs.

Spot rhyming words and alliteration (e.g. big brown bear).

4. Model reading behaviours

Let children see you reading signs, lists, recipes or books.

Talk about what you are doing: "I'm reading the instructions to see what comes next."

What matters most:

Short, frequent reading moments are more effective than long sessions.

Enjoyment and interaction matter far more than reading words independently.



Key Stage 1 (Years 1–2)

What reading looks like at this stage:

Children are learning to decode words, build fluency and begin to understand what they read. They benefit greatly from structured support and discussion.

Best practice at home

1. Read regularly together

Aim for little and often (10–15 minutes).

Your child may read to you, you may read to them, or you may take turns.

2. Support decoding without guessing

Encourage children to sound out unfamiliar words.

Prompt with: “Can you spot a digraph?” or “What does that sound make?”

The goal of sounding out words is always to understand the story.

3. Build fluency

Re-read familiar books to build speed and expression.

Model fluent reading by reading a page aloud first.

4. Talk about meaning

Ask simple comprehension questions:

“Who was your favourite character?”

“Why did they do that?”

“How did the story end?”

5. Celebrate effort, not just accuracy

Praise perseverance and improvements.

Avoid correcting every mistake if meaning is clear.

What matters most:

Confidence and motivation are key predictors of progress.

Children who enjoy reading will read more and improve faster.



Key Stage 2 (Years 3–6)

What reading looks like at this stage:

Children are developing fluency, stamina and deeper comprehension. Reading is a tool for learning across the curriculum as well as a source of pleasure.

It is normal for confident readers to prefer reading silently; discussion is often more valuable than listening to every word.

Best practice at home

1. Maintain a daily reading habit

Independent reading is important, but shared reading still has value.

Older children benefit from discussing books, even if they read alone.

2. Ask thoughtful questions

Encourage deeper thinking:

“Why do you think the author chose that word?”

“How do we know how the character feels?”

“What might happen next and why?”

3. Encourage a wide range of reading

Fiction, non-fiction, newspapers, instructions and graphic novels all count.

Choice is strongly linked to motivation.

4. Model reading as a lifelong skill

Talk about what you read and why.

Share recommendations and read alongside your child.

5. Support vocabulary development

Discuss unfamiliar words naturally.

Encourage children to use new words in conversation.

What matters most:

Reading volume is strongly linked to vocabulary and comprehension.

Regular discussion helps children move beyond surface understanding.



Top Tips for Early Reading & Phonics at Home (EYFS and KS1)

Start with enjoyment

- A love of books comes first. Read widely and often – stories, rhymes, magazines, recipes and signs all count.
- You do not need to read every word. Talk about the pictures, use silly voices, make sound effects and enjoy the story together.

Re-reading really helps

- Encourage your child to re-read favourite books and school reading books.
- Re-reading builds confidence, fluency and understanding.
- Many children benefit from reading the same book more than once: first to work out the words, then to read more smoothly, and finally to focus on meaning.

Support without rushing

- Give your child time to sound out unfamiliar words.
- Encourage them to look closely at the letters rather than guessing.
- If they are stuck, tell them the word, explain it, and then re-read the sentence together.

Print is everywhere

- Point out words in the environment: shop signs, road signs, food packaging.
- Talk about interesting words and what they mean.

Helpful phonics games to try:

Robot talk (oral blending)

Say words by stretching out the sounds (e.g. p-i-g, f-r-o-g) and ask your child to blend them together. Stick to short, simple words at first.

I spy (initial sounds)

“I spy with my little eye something beginning with s...” This helps children tune into the first sound in words.

Playing with words

Change one sound at a time: mat → sat → sap. This helps children hear how sounds work within words.



Helpful reminders for all ages

- Reading should be positive and pressure-free.
- Short, frequent sessions are better than long, infrequent ones.
- Consistency over time has the biggest impact.
- If your child is tired or reluctant, being read to still counts.

Busy Parents' Top 5

If you only have a few minutes, these are the five habits that make the biggest difference:

1. Read little and often: 5–10 minutes a day is more effective than long, irregular sessions.
2. Talk about books – discussing pictures, characters and ideas builds understanding.
3. Re-read favourites – builds fluency and confidence.
4. Let your child see you read – models purpose and enjoyment.
5. Keep it positive – praise effort, enjoy the time together; being read to always counts.

Every family looks different. Consistency, enjoyment and encouragement are what matter most.



Early reading: Using phonics to decode

The system used to teach children to read in school is called phonics. Although the English alphabet contains only 26 letters, spoken English uses about 44 sounds (**phonemes**). These phonemes are represented by letters (**graphemes**). In words, a sound can be represented by a single letter (such as “s” or “a”) or a group of letters (such as “sh” or “ch”).

What differs now from how letters and sounds were previously taught is the very short sounds that letters make. You may remember being taught “l” as a “luh” sound. Now, we give it a short “l” sound, pronounced as you would at the end of “Hull”. Similarly, with “N”, don’t be tempted to say “nuh” - it’s very much a “n” on its own, like in “London”. When you say a letter, think how it sounds in a word. For example, “F” makes a very short “f” sound in “fluff”, rather than a “fuh” sound.

It’s really important though that you keep the sounds really short, because this will help children to blend sounds to pronounce full words. Blending sounds smoothly helps to improve fluency when reading. Blending is more difficult to do with longer words, so learning how to blend accurately at an early age is important. Model how to ‘sound talk’ sounds and blend them smoothly together when children encounter words they are finding hard to read. Help them to sound it out, then blend it together. For example, reading “p-l-a-n-t, plant”.

Some sounds (digraphs) are represented by two letters, such as the “sh” in “f-i-sh” or the “ck” in “k-i-ck”. Children should sound out the digraph and not the individual letters (such as “r-i-ch” and not “r-i-c-h”). Some words (trigraphs) may also have three letters to represent one sound (such as the “ear” in “h-ear” or the “air” in “pair”). There are also split digraphs, which are letters separated by a consonant. These make a long vowel sound (such as the “o-e” in “bone”)



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<p>Vocabulary Find and explain the meaning of words in context.</p> <p></p>	<p>Infer Make and justify inferences using evidence from the text.</p> <p></p>	<p>Predict Predict what will happen based from the details given or implied.</p> <p></p>	<p>Explain Explain how content is related and contributed to the meaning as a whole. Explain how meaning is enhanced through choice of language. Explain the themes and patterns that develop across the text. Explain how information contributes to the overall experience.</p> <p></p>	<p>Retrieve Retrieve and record information and identify key details from fiction and non-fiction.</p> <p></p>	<p>Summarise Summarise the main ideas from more than one paragraph.</p> <p></p>
<p>Example questions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do the words and suggest about the character, setting and mood? • Which word tells you that....? • Which keyword tells you about the character/setting/mood? • Find one word in the text which means..... • Find and highlight the word that is closest in meaning to..... • Find a word or phrase which shows/suggests that..... 	<p>Example questions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Find and copy a group of words which show that... • How do these words make the reader feel? How does this paragraph suggest this? • How do the descriptions of show that they are • How can you tell that..... • What impression of do you get from these paragraphs? • What voice might these characters use? • What was thinking when..... • Who is telling the story? 	<p>Example questions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • From the cover what do you think this text is going to be about? • What is happening now? • What happened before this? What will happen after? • What does this paragraph suggest will happen next? • What makes you think this? • Do you think the choice of setting will influence how the plot develops? • Do you think... will happen? Yes, no or maybe? Explain your answer using evidence from the text. 	<p>Example questions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why is the text arranged in this way? • What structures has the author used? • What is the purpose of this text feature? • Is the use of effective? • The mood of the character changes throughout the text. Find and copy the phrases which show this. • What is the author's point of view? • What affect does have on the audience? • How does the author engage the reader here? • Which words and phrases did effectively? • Which section was the most interesting/exciting part? • How are these sections linked? 	<p>Example questions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can you number these events 1-5 in the order that they happened? • What happened after? • What was the first thing that happened in the story? • Can you summarise in a sentence the opening/middle/end of the story? • In what order do these chapter headings come in the story? • What can you learn from from this section? • Give one example of • The story is told from whose perspective? 	