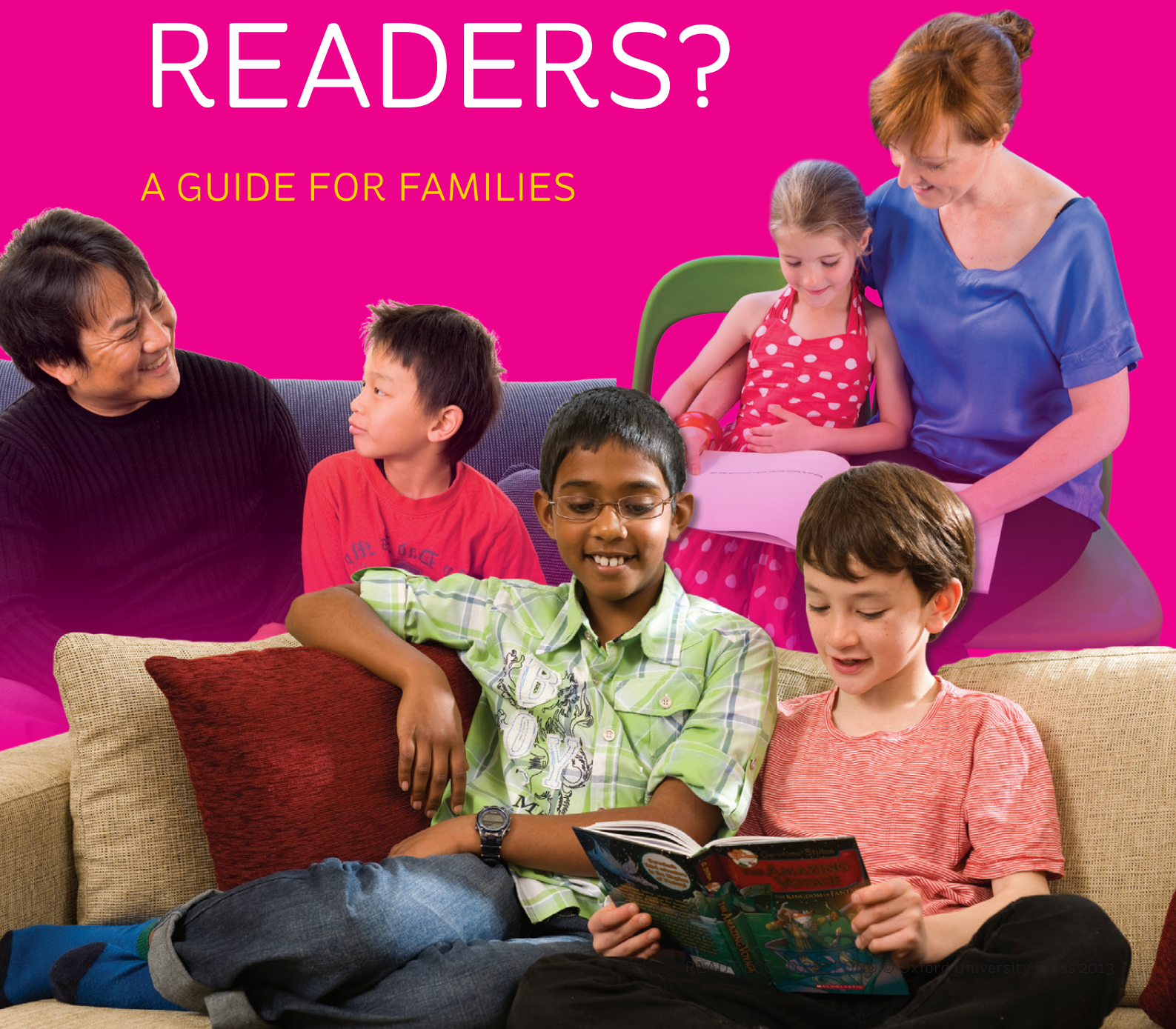


WHAT MAKES INDEPENDENT AND SUCCESSFUL READERS?

A GUIDE FOR FAMILIES



Reading is for enjoyment and learning, and independent and successful readers use a range of strategies to understand an author's message. They:

- are interested in reading
- expect to understand what they are reading
- 'get into' the book
- know there are different types of books (e.g. fiction/story books, non-fiction books, picture books, comics)
- know they need to use different strategies when reading some books
- realise when they have stopped understanding what they are reading
- select an appropriate strategy to use when they aren't understanding
- don't give up if their first strategy isn't successful
- know they make errors but are optimistic they will understand what they are reading
- 'get' what the author is saying.

WHY DO CHILDREN WANT TO BECOME READERS?

- Children are interested in the world and being able to read allows them to learn about their interests.
- Children may want to read about characters and personalities connected to movies, TV shows, music, toys and sporting teams.
- Children may want to read books that their friends read.

HOW DO CHILDREN BECOME READERS?

Before starting school, children are already developing their listening and speaking abilities. These provide the foundation for reading and writing skills. Some children may identify familiar letters (such as those in their own name), repeat jingles and rhymes, ask for the same book to be read again and again, and be starting to make writing marks on all kinds of surfaces! They are on the way to becoming readers and writers.



STAGES OF READING DEVELOPMENT

Children move through stages on the way to becoming independent and successful readers. These stages are not age- or time-specific and many children are in more than one stage at the same time.

Stage 0: Pre-reading

Children identify and name some letters of the alphabet (e.g. in their name), words (e.g. their own name and those of family members), and labels (e.g. media advertising and packaging). They read some high-frequency words in books (e.g. *mum, dad, dog, cat*) and hold a book the right way up, point towards print, and turn the pages. They 'read' a story without even looking at the words (but perhaps the pictures) and can retell what happened (even remembering some exact wording). They recognise that words can start with the same sound (e.g. *slippery snake*) and rhyme (e.g. *the cat sat on the mat*).

Stage 1: Initial reading or decoding (phonics)

Children's listening and speaking skills are developing faster than their reading skills, i.e. they may know the meaning of words and be able to speak them before they can read them. They learn the names and sounds of the letters of the alphabet and recognise that words are composed of these letters. They learn how to decode words (phonic skills) and separate words into chunks (syllables). They can read some high-frequency words. Their reading is word-by-word (at least early on) and they use context and pictures to help them work out words. They can retell what they read and they usually read aloud.

Stage 2: Confirmation, fluency and ungluing from print

Children can decode more complex words using phonic skills and are able to identify and name further high-frequency words. They are better able to use context to work out words and meanings, and they can predict events and understand more complex books. They can retell in some detail what they have read. They have a range of reading strategies to choose from if they have difficulties. They read many familiar books that help to develop their fluency. They may still read aloud.

Stage 3: Reading to learn new things

Children are reading books and text from other sources (e.g. newspapers, magazines, the internet) that increase their knowledge about the world, relationships and ideas, and they are developing a larger spoken and reading vocabulary. They are reading some books not related to their personal experiences, and are thinking about whether they agree with the author. They develop skills to skim and scan for information and fluently read familiar books with expression. They usually read silently.

Stage 4: Multiple viewpoints

Children read a range of books where authors have different views about the same topic. They 'weigh-up' what they have read and develop an opinion. They read newspapers, magazines, the internet and text from other sources. They monitor whether they understand what they are reading and problem-solve any difficulties. They read silently.

(Adapted from Chall, 1983)

How can I encourage my child to read?



Talk with your child.

Listening and speaking provides your child with different ways to learn and think about the world.



Provide a positive role model.

Chat about what you are reading in books, newspapers and magazines, or viewing onscreen.



Read to your child every day.

Read books (or parts of them) to your child. Point out words when you are travelling, read something aloud from a newspaper, magazine or book, or point out something interesting onscreen.



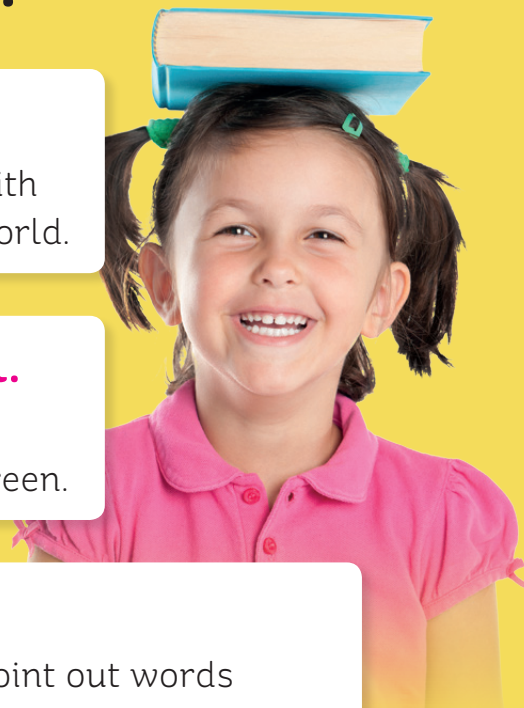
Listen to your child read.

All children like to receive positive feedback and listening to your child read is a great opportunity to congratulate him or her on what has been achieved. Children need to see themselves as readers.



Encourage your child to read from a wide range of sources.

There is much to learn and enjoy from reading picture books, short stories, poetry, comics, magazines, instruction manuals and so on.



WHY DO TEACHERS SEND BOOKS HOME TO BE READ?

- Teachers listen to your child read, record how he or she has read a book, and use this information to plan lessons that meet his or her learning needs. Teachers send books home so children will have valuable opportunities to practise what is taught at school.
- Your child may have already read the take-home book and be able to tell you about it. However, as with any developing skill, additional practice will help your child to improve his or her word recognition, comprehension and fluency.
- Another benefit is that you can get a sense of how your child is progressing.

WHEN CAN I FIND THE TIME FOR MY CHILD TO READ THE TAKE-HOME BOOK?

- Children arrive home from school looking for relaxation and entertainment. How this ‘down time’ is used is different for all children – it may involve playing sport, watching TV, using a computer or tablet, attending interest clubs, seeing friends, or enjoying time alone.
- So, how might you fit reading the take-home book into a busy day? The ideal situation would be to sit with your child, but that’s not always possible. Here’s how you might manage a busy weeknight scenario.

Reading a book in the car

As you’re travelling in the car, ask your child to read to you from the back seat. While you can’t see the book, you’ll know whether what is said ‘sounds right’. If what your child is reading doesn’t sound right, you could say:

- *Sorry, I missed that bit. Can you read it to me again?*
- *I’m not sure what the author meant there.*
- *I love that bit. Read it to me again.*
- *So what was (the character) doing?*
- *I wish I could see the pictures/photos/drawings. Tell me about them.*
- *Who was it that said...?*
- *What did they say about...?*
- *What did you just say?*

These approaches can also be used when preparing meals.



CASE STUDY

Reading a book at home

If you're able to listen to your child read at home, there are a few points to consider:

- Set aside a usual time for reading because routine helps to develop a readiness to read.
- Let your child choose the place for reading. Successful reading can happen on the floor, out the back, and in the cubby house!
- Encourage your child to hold the book so he or she becomes familiar with handling it (turning the pages and so on). In the case of an e-book that is displayed on a tablet device or computer, give your child time to become familiar with how to navigate through the e-book and interact with it.

WHAT IF MY CHILD REFUSES TO READ?

What should you do if your child doesn't want to read the take-home book?

You may hear comments such as:

- *Do I have to?*
- *I'm too tired.*
- *The teacher didn't say I had to.* (Check with the teacher so you know what is expected.)
- *I forgot to bring it home.* (Check your child's school bag.)
- *But I'm playing with...*
- *Can't I just finish...?*
- *That book's boring/dumb/stupid...*

It's at this point that you may like to use one of the following strategies – because *some* reading practice is better than *no* reading practice.

- Use a timer (kitchen, sport) so your child understands that the reading practice will be for a short period.
- Read the book aloud to your child.
- Read the book aloud to your child but have your child read words that you know he or she can already read.
- Have your child point to the words while you read the words aloud.
- Read the book aloud together.
- Read half the book each.
- Put a sticky note a few pages ahead and tell your child they just need to read to the sticky note.



- Read left page/right page (and yes, your child can have the pages with fewer words).
- Say, 'I'll read it to you and then you can read it to me.'
- When reading a story (fiction) book try changing the names of characters to your family's names!
- If the book is available as an audio book, have your child read along with the narrator.
- Download audio books onto a computer, smart phone or tablet device and have your child read along with the narrator.
- Suggest that your child reads the book into a voice recorder or into a microphone (even if the microphone doesn't work).
- Ask your child to read to a stuffed toy, for example, a favourite teddy bear. (The author has seen this work very successfully with a number of children.) Your child could also read to a willing sibling or placid pet.
- Encourage your child to read to a relative or friend via a video call.
- Have your child use a puppet to do the reading.
- Have your child read the book using a different voice.
- Give your child a special pointer, for example a magic wand or laser pointer.
- Give your child a reading cape or reading hat to wear.
- Have your child read while wearing swimming goggles or novelty glasses, or using a magnifying glass.
- Let your child read using a handheld torch, booklight or head torch.
- Let your child play his or her favourite music while reading.
- Have your child stand and read, read while walking around, or sit in an unusual place, for example, under a table, on the bench or under a blanket.
- Link reading the book with after-school or after-meal snacks.
- Take the book with you to appointments so it can be read while waiting (e.g. at the doctor's).
- If your child wants to start staying up later (as she or he gets older) tell him or her that when the book has been read they can read other books in bed. If they don't want to read then they can turn out the light.



After reading the book, it is essential that both of you talk about the author's message. This is for you to confirm that your child understands that reading is for enjoyment and learning and isn't just about correctly naming the words (although this is certainly important).

WHY TALK ABOUT BOOKS BEFORE READING THEM?

Introducing a book is necessary for children of all ages. As adults, we do our own introductions when we're selecting what to read. We read the blurb, look at the number of pages, the size of the font, the author's name (familiar and comfortable, or new and intriguing), and glance at the photos, illustrations, diagrams and so on. Children need to be introduced to this process as well. It's much easier to read a book if you already know something about it.

If your child has already read the book, then your discussion about it may be short. You may just like to ask your child what you can expect to hear him or her to be reading about.

A new book may need a longer conversation. You can do this in a range of ways:

- Talk about the title, author, pictures and blurb (you may like to read the book dedication and wonder who the person/people might be and why it was dedicated to them). Who would your child dedicate a book to?
- If your child has read another book about the same topic or by the same author, discuss what seems to be the same or different about this book.
- Discuss how to pronounce the names of characters and places in the book.
- Ask your child to predict what the book might be about, using the information from your earlier conversation.



WHAT SHOULD I DO IF MY CHILD CAN'T WORK OUT A WORD?

When listening to your child read, it's tempting to correct the mistakes he or she makes. While this may seem helpful, your child doesn't need to be reminded about how much you know. Being interrupted can also cause your child to lose his or her place or to become distracted. You need to give your child time to work out an unfamiliar word or, if the attempt is unsuccessful, for you to share strategies that can be used.

If your child pauses while reading, wait for five seconds to allow time for them to work out the word. Then give a helpful prompt, for example:

- *What do you know that could help you work it out?*
- *What do you already know about this word?*
- *Does the word look like any other words you already know?*
- *Look for a part of the word that you know.*
- *Try breaking the word into syllables.*
- *Look at the first letter. Look at the last letter. Look at the letters in between. What do you think the word might be?*
- *Say the first sound in the word and then read to the end of the sentence. What do you think the word might be?*
- *Try slowly sounding it out.*
- *I'll say the first part of the word so you can work out the rest of it.*
- *It rhymes with... What do you think it could be?*
- *Read to the end of the sentence. Any idea what the word might be?*
- *You said... but it doesn't sound right in the sentence. Have another look at it.*
- *Look at the word again because what you said doesn't match what is on the page.*

- *If the word was... what letter would it start with? What letter does this word start with?*
- *Try the word... Does that sound right?*

Choose carefully! Not all strategies will work for all words.

If your child hasn't worked out the word after two prompts, name the word. Then ask your child to say the word again, start the sentence from the beginning and continue reading.

When the book has been finished (or your child has had enough), always talk about what was read so you can be sure he or she understood what the author was saying.



WHAT IF MY CHILD 'READS' THE PICTURES?

Most children go through a stage of looking at the pictures in order to 'read' the book, but at some point there will be fewer or no pictures in some books. If your child appears to read the pictures, you may like to use the following strategies to encourage them to focus on the words:

- As a page is turned, cover the picture(s) and have your child read the words on the page. *Ask your child: What do you think the picture(s) will look like?*
- As a page is turned, cover the words and ask your child to look at the picture(s). *Ask your child: What do you think the words will be?* Uncover the words then have your child read the words to check whether their predictions were correct.



TALKING FOR UNDERSTANDING

Sometimes it's useful to ask a question while your child is reading, to confirm his or her understandings or to suggest a strategy, for example:

- *What do you think this says here?*
- *Find the part where it says that. . .*
- *On this page, I can see a word you've learned. Can you find it?*
- *What word on this line tells you that. . .?*
- *Listen while I read a line. See if you can find it. (Hint: Select a line near the bottom of the page.)*
- *How do you know that. . .?*
- *Find the words starting with the letter. . . on this page.*
- *Do you see any of the letters in your name on this page?*
- *Find the words with. . . on this page, for example, 'in'.*
- *With your finger, cover a word that can be predicted. What word do you think it might be?*
- *Show me the part that tells us about the picture.*

WHAT IF THE BOOK SEEMS TOO HARD OR TOO EASY FOR MY CHILD TO READ?

A book may be too difficult for your child if he or she hasn't been introduced to it or if it's written in an unfamiliar style. For example, your child may easily read a fiction book but find it difficult to read a non-fiction book. If a take-home book seems too difficult and your child is getting frustrated, then it's time to stop. You can ease out of the situation by making one of the following comments:

- This seems like hard work. Let's read something else.
- How about I finish reading the book and you can be ready to tell me what it was about?

Teachers introduce new reading strategies by using books at a slightly challenging level. They are not generally used as take-home books but on occasions a take-home book may seem too difficult. Be sure to let the teacher know. Reading easy and familiar books at home helps your child to develop confidence and skills.



WHAT IF MY CHILD WANTS TO READ THE SAME BOOK, OR BOOKS IN A SERIES?

- Reading the same book supports your child's development of fluency and confidence and some books are such a good read that they just want to enjoy them again and again.
- Books from a series offer familiar characters and themes and similar book layouts, so your child can quickly 'get into' them. For example, when reading fiction books the characters' names can already be pronounced.
- Over time your child's teachers will introduce new book types to broaden his or her reading diet.

WHAT IF MY CHILD IS STUCK ON THE SAME BOOK LEVEL?

While your child may effortlessly read a take-home book, this doesn't necessarily mean that he or she should be moved up to the next level. Why?

- Your child may read *that* book type (e.g. fiction book) very well, but still need practice developing skills to read other types of books at that same level (e.g. non-fiction books).
- Even if your child's reading is word-perfect, more practice may be needed to make sure that he or she understands what is being read.

HOW CAN I GET MY CHILD TO READ MORE BOOKS AT HOME?

Find books about his or her interests because these will be appealing. Where do you get these books?

- Borrow from your local library. Your child may not be able to read the whole book but may be able to read some sections, and the photos, illustrations and diagrams can be interesting to talk about. You could read some parts of the book to your child.
- Borrow from family and friends.
- Buy from second-hand bookshops.
- Buy from council libraries when they have their annual sales.
- Buy from garage sales and fêtes.
- Buy from bookshop sale tables.
- Buy from publishers' book clubs.
- Give a book/magazine subscription as a gift.
- Go online. There are many websites where you can download free e-books or buy them at cheap prices.
- Find your child's favourite authors online so they can read about current and upcoming titles.
- Have your child write book reviews for children's online book clubs.
- Encourage your child to read the book of an enjoyed movie.



Remember, too, that while your child may be reluctant to read regular books, he or she may read many other types of texts, for example, magazines, e-books and webpages. This is still 'reading'.

Think about what *you* read for work, leisure and family obligations. Use these to broaden your child's reading experiences and provide opportunities to read, talk, enjoy and learn.

- websites
- text messages
- emails
- apps
- newspapers
- magazines
- advertisements
- signs
- school notices
- newsletters
- recipes
- ingredients on food packages
- menus
- instruction manuals
- forms
- maps
- programs
- catalogues
- order forms
- medicinal instructions.
- What else?



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