



Reading at Home

How can parents support reading at home?

- Choose a good time for reading—just five minutes of focused, quality time is more effective than longer sessions when you're both distracted.
- Before reading, talk about the book. You can introduce any tricky or unfamiliar words to help your child understand the story better.
- If the book seems challenging, don't ask your child to sound out every word. Instead, focus on words they can decode confidently.
- Try paired reading—read together or take turns reading pages.
- Engage in 'Book Talk' to discuss the story and build comprehension (see the 'Book Talk' section for helpful tips).
- Offer lots of praise and let your child know how much you enjoy hearing them read.
- Involve others in listening to your child read—grandparents, friends, or visitors can all take part.
- Keep reading sessions short, fun, and relaxed. Reading should always feel like a positive experience, not a chore.
- Remember, confident readers in Key Stage 2 still benefit from support—check out the 'Book Talk' and 'Reading for Meaning' sections for more ideas.

What strategies support decoding?

One of the key foundations of early reading is learning how to 'sound out' words and blend sounds together—this process is known as *decoding*. In the early stages, children read books that match the phonics they've been taught at school. As they grow in confidence, they'll continue using these decoding skills alongside other helpful strategies.

Here are some effective decoding strategies to support your child's reading:

- **Blending or sounding out words** – especially useful in the early years. For example: *ch-o-p, p-l-ay, t-r-ai-n*.
- **Recognising common endings and prefixes** – such as *-ing, -ed, -er, -tion, -able*, or *un-, de-, in-*.
- **Identifying root words** in longer or more complex words – e.g., *discovery* (root: *cover*), *incoming*, *subway*, *discontentment*.

- **Breaking words into syllables** – to make them easier to read. For example: *mis-con-duct, en-count-er-ing, ex-tra-or-din-a-ry*.
- **Recognising familiar words at sight** – fluent readers recognize many words without needing to decode each one.
- **Using context and picture clues** – the meaning of a sentence or a picture can help figure out unfamiliar words.

Top Tip:

If your child pauses to decode a word, encourage them to *go back and re-read the sentence* afterward. This helps them regain the meaning and flow of the text.

What comes after fluent reading?

While decoding helps children read words on the page, true reading success comes from *understanding* what those words mean. As children become more confident readers, the focus at school shifts from just decoding to developing *reading comprehension*—the ability to make sense of and engage with what they read.

Here are some key skills involved in reading for meaning:

- **Skimming** a text to quickly find important or relevant information
- **Understanding the writer's purpose and message**—why did they write the text and what are they trying to say?
- **Recognising the writer's techniques**—such as subheadings in non-fiction, short sentences to build suspense in a story, or metaphors in a poem
- **Building a strong vocabulary**—and being curious about the meanings of unfamiliar words
- **Forming and expressing opinions** about a text—and backing them up with examples or quotes
- **Using inference**—reading between the lines to understand what the writer *suggests* rather than says directly

By developing these skills, children become thoughtful, independent readers who can enjoy and understand a wide range of texts.

How can I talk to my child about reading?

Book Talk is a fantastic way to support your child's reading comprehension and to enjoy meaningful conversations about what they're reading. It's not about quizzing your child with constant questions—instead, try making thoughtful comments or sharing your own ideas about the story. This encourages your child to think more deeply and respond naturally.

Here are a few ways to get the conversation started:

- “That part reminded me of...”
- “I wonder why the character did that...”
- “I didn’t expect that to happen—did you?”
- “This setting feels really creepy/exciting/peaceful—what do you think?”

If things start to feel stressful, try these tips:

- Use **paired reading**—take turns reading a page, paragraph, or chapter.
- Don’t worry about perfection. Keeping the flow and meaning of the story is more important than correcting every word.
- Keep sessions **short and enjoyable**. The goal is to make reading a special and relaxed part of your day.

How else can I support reading at home?

Reading isn’t just about books—it’s about developing a love for language and stories in everyday life. Here are some simple but powerful ways to support your child’s reading journey:

- **Make time for meaningful conversations**—chat about a TV show, news story, film, or anything you encounter during a walk, mealtime, car ride, or even bath-time.
- **Read aloud to your child**—stories, poems, articles, or anything that sparks interest. Older children still enjoy listening to rich, challenging texts.
- **Be a reading role model**—let your child see you reading for both enjoyment and everyday tasks.
- **Visit libraries and bookshops** together to explore and choose new reading material.
- **Listen to stories**—whether on CDs, radio, or online platforms, audiobooks are a great way to enjoy stories together.
- **Provide a wide range of reading material**—books, magazines, websites, recipes, instructions, TV guides, catalogues, and games all help build literacy and curiosity.