

10 READING TIPS

01. ENCOURAGE YOUR CHILD TO READ

Reading helps your child's wellbeing, develops imagination and has educational benefits too. Just a few minutes a day can have a big impact on children of all ages. It's never too early to start. Even as a baby, they might not understand the words, but your child will love cuddling up, listening to your voice and looking at the pictures.

Give the gift of reading and buy books as presents and rewards. Encourage your children and their friends to swap books with each other. This gives them the chance to read new stories and gets them talking about what they've read.

It's really important that they see you as a reader too. Wherever possible, try to model a love of reading. It could be a newspaper, magazine, cookery book, poetry or a novel. Show your child that reading for pleasure is not just for children.

02. READ ALOUD REGULARLY

Try to read to / with your child every day. It's a special time to snuggle up and enjoy a story. Stories matter and children love re-reading them and pouring over the pictures. Try adding funny voices to bring characters to life. There's no right or wrong way to enjoy a story together. If your child is reluctant to read you could share it by taking it in turns, one page at a time. Or, one of you could read the dialogue and put on different voices.

03. ENCOURAGE READING CHOICE

Give children lots of opportunities to read different things in their own time - it doesn't just have to be books. There's fiction, non-fiction, poetry, comics, magazines, recipes and much more. Your child will feel more interested in the story if they've picked it out themselves. It's also ok if they keep returning to the same story. In fact, re-reading a book is recommended because it helps them to pick up new information, become more familiar with the plot points, dive deeper into the themes of the book and make connections between the book and themselves. It helps them to become more fluent readers which is vital. You could try leaving interesting reading material in different places around the home and see who picks it up. Any reading is important for their development so value whatever they choose.

04. READ TOGETHER

Choose a favourite time to read together as a family and enjoy it. This might be everyone reading the same book together, reading different things at the same time, or getting your children to read to each other. This time spent reading together can be relaxing for all.

Allow them the time to look at the pictures. You don't just have to read the words on the page. Discuss what the children can see, there might be something funny in the pictures that you can laugh about together. The pictures are also useful clues to help the children understand the text and predict what might happen next.

05. CREATE A COMFORTABLE ENVIRONMENT

Make a calm, comfortable place for your family to relax and read independently - or together. Sit close together and encourage your child to hold the book themselves and, if they can, turn the pages. If you can, turn off the TV and put away other distractions such as phones and tablets. Reading is easier if you can both enjoy the story without other distractions.

07. TALK ABOUT BOOKS

This is a great way to make connections, develop understanding and make reading even more enjoyable. Start by discussing the front cover and talking about what it reveals and predict what the book could be about. Recap what you've read so far or what they can remember from previous reading. You could discuss something that happened that surprised you, or something new that you found out. You could discuss the characters and make links to other books you've read. You could talk about how the book makes you feel and whether it reminds you of anything. Books can be a great way to talk about your child's fears and worries, or to help them deal with their emotions.

Get other family members involved too. Story time is something that everyone can enjoy, it's a great way to bond. Maybe your child could share a story with a grandparent or family member.

09. MAKE READING ACTIVE

Play games that involve making connections between pictures, objects and words, such as reading about an object and finding similar things in your home. You could organise treasure hunts related to what you're reading. Try creating your child's very own book by using photos from your day and adding captions.

10. ENGAGE YOUR CHILD IN READING IN A WAY THAT SUITS THEM

You know your child best and you'll know the best times for your child to read. If they have special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) then short, creative activities may be the way to get them most interested. If English is an additional language, encourage reading in a child's first language, as well as in English. Audio books are a great way of introducing books to children. They could listen to the story and follow along with the book. What matters most is that they enjoy it because it will make them want to read more and more and more!

