

Is your child ready to learn to read?

What does reading involve?

If someone asks you what reading is all about I wonder what you would answer? The process of reading is actually quite a complex interaction between physical, intellectual and emotional processes. Physical processes involve hearing, seeing; and hand/eye co-ordination; intellectual skills include pattern recognition, aural and visual memory, comprehension, a knowledge of vocabulary and syntax, an understanding how books work, some knowledge of the printed word, and understanding and recognising similarities and differences. Just as importantly, however, reading involves the emotions: in order to achieve success a child must actually want to read! However, having described how complex the process is, it is also true that **for most children (80%) learning to read need not prove difficult but can be both pleasurable and fun!** A young child has a natural desire to copy his parents and usually to please them; it goes without saying then, that one of the main motivators to your child reading is seeing you yourself read.

How do you, the parent, know when a child is ready to read?

A child is ready to learn to read when she/he has developed reading readiness skills. If you answer yes to most of the following questions then it is time to start teaching!

A Reading Readiness Test for parents to use

Can my child:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Concentrate for a short period of time?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Speak in simple sentences with reasonably correct grammar and syntax?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Tell a story from pictures?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do a simple jigsaw?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Match by colour?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Match by shape?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Recognise familiar logos e.g. on a food packet, outside shops and on TV advertisements?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Remember simple songs and rhymes	<input type="checkbox"/>
Continue a simple repeating pattern with beads or crayons	<input type="checkbox"/>
Hold a book the right way up?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Relate simple experiences?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Read any words on a computer?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Recognise a face in a photograph especially his own?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Watch a children's TV programme for 5 minutes?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Remember the names of several TV characters?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Recognise his or her own name?	<input type="checkbox"/>

How can I teach reading readiness?

Pre-reading Skills	Possible home activities
<p>Matching – Reading involves identifying and matching letter sounds with words., and word shapes with other word shapes.</p>	Pairing socks from the laundry, Matching colours of clothes Shape Sorters Jigsaw Puzzles Playing games – Uno, Bingo, Snap, Lotto Activity books Sticker books – match the sticker to the word
<p>Rhyming Those children that have a good understanding of rhyming are able to grasp reading and spelling easier.</p>	Sing Nursery Rhymes with your child Take your child to a musical group Make up silly rhymes during the day
<p>Letter Skills To read well children need to recognise letters and sounds</p>	Play I Spy. Sound the letters out when reading books to your child Draw round letters and words
<p>Direction. English books are read from front to back, left to right, top to bottom. Simple as it seems this skill needs to be learned - known as the basic mechanics of books.</p>	Read, read and read again to your child. Simple books are best here that have uncluttered pages and clear font – children have to learn which print is relevant to the story and which is not. Also try and buy books where the words follow the standard left to right pattern; some books have the words all over the page, which can be very confusing to a young reader.
<p>Motor Skills A motor skill is a skill required for a human to move their muscles in a controlled way. Gross motor skills refer to movement of the larger muscles such as lifting the head, walking, rolling and crawling. Fine motor skills refer to more precise movement of the muscles such as controlling a pen, hand-eye co-ordination and the ability to manipulate small objects.</p>	Dot-to-Dot puzzles Colouring Painting Play Dough Cooking Dancing Swimming Playing games Threading beads Play instruments Use of a wide variety of writing implements – chalk, felt-tipped pens, different sized pencils, pens, a paintbrush etc. Construction toys such as Lego, Stickle Bricks Setting out a train track Using the mouse on a computer
<p>Concepts of Print Children have to learn that print has meaning and to be able to decipher which squiggles mean something and which don't.</p>	Make your own one-word-per-page books for your child. Read to your child. Try and buy simple books that have uncluttered pages and clear print: first reading books should have little punctuation, consistent, clear font and simple relevant illustrations. **
<p>Language Skills It is important for children to be exposed to a wide vocabulary as the more experience of language they have the easier reading will be.</p>	Talk to your child as much as you can and about as much as you can!! Engage him in conversations when doing an activity together. Answer his questions and ask him questions. Encourage him to speak in correct grammar by gently repeating his sentences after him but correctly and without pointing out his mistakes.

The most important things you can do with your child is talk; the second most important is to read!

**** Bright Start Reading and Writing Toolkits, available through this site have been specially designed to make reading as simple as possible for the young reader**