



Hearing your child read:

Top tips: age 3 - 4

You want to make sure that your child gets off to the best possible start. It's all about sharing and enjoying books as well as introducing some of the very first skills of reading:

Read together every day - Children need to read little and often, so snuggle up every day with a book or sit at the screen together at a time that works for you both.

Read everywhere you go - Read on the move and show your child how you read words everywhere you go. Point out words they might recognise, including signs and logos in the street or on labels.

Find your favourites and add to them - Children love to listen to and read their favourite books over and over again and to remember some parts by heart. That's fine as enjoyment and memory play a key part in learning to read.

All join in - Start asking your child to join in with bits that are repeated in stories, e.g. *'Run run as fast as you can! You can't catch me I'm the gingerbread man!'*.

Talk about books, words and pictures - Before you start reading a book, talk about the title, the pictures on the cover (front and back). Look through the pictures together and ask your child what they think the story might be about.

Talk about stories and events - As you read and when you've finished, sometimes ask questions about the story. *What was your favourite bit? What do you think about that? What would you do?* Get your child to ask you questions too.

Retell stories - Sometimes after you have shared a story, ask your child to retell it to you. Help by asking *'What happened first?' 'What next?' 'And then what?'* Can you remember what happens at the end? Encourage them to use plenty of expression.

Listen to and sing songs and rhymes

Singing lots of songs and nursery rhymes helps your child to hear the sounds in words and build up a bank of known favourites. Play with words and sounds and make up nonsense rhymes in songs or nursery rhymes they know. Encourage them to join in.

Top tips: age 4 - 5

Read together every day

Reading with your child continues to be really important so keep reading lots of different books together. Most picture books will be too hard for a child of this age to read alone, but it's good for them just to listen to a story or information book and talk about the pictures with you.

Allow some reading alone time

Try a short reading time when you are reading (newspaper, magazine, book, or screen) and your child is too. It's good to start this habit of quiet reading time early, however short to begin with!

Talk about the book before you begin reading

Before reading a book together, always talk about the title, the pictures and the information on the cover (front and back). If it's new, ask what your child thinks the book might be about. If it's an old favourite then talk about the bits you love most! Don't worry if some books get chosen again and again!

Read with different voices

When reading aloud use lots of expression and try different voices for different characters. Get your child to join in with bits too, such as, '*They pulled and they pulled!*' and '*Fee, fi, fo, fom...*'. See if your child can copy you!

Ask each other questions

Talk about the stories and information books when you've finished reading together and ask questions. *What did you like best? Why did the tiger let Floppy go? Have you ever played a trick on anybody?* Get your child to ask you questions too.

Retell stories and events

Ask your child about things that happened at school or with their friends. Sometimes, after you've shared a story or watched a TV programme, ask your child to tell you about it. Help them by asking 'What happened first?' 'What next?' 'And then what?'

Top tips: age 5 - 7

Read with expression

Read with expression when reading to your child. Use different voices and vary the volume for effect or for different bits of information such as, *Did you know that the Tyrannosaurus Rex...? Wow!* You'll soon see that your child will then try these skills when reading to you!

It's still good to share

Don't give up on talking about picture books, short chapter books and even sharing bedtime stories and information books with your child. Choose what to read together and exchange views. Sharing a love of reading will rub off on them!

Take the lead

Try reading slightly more difficult books together – you read one page and your child reads the next, or you read the main information and they read the captions. Hearing you read fluently and seeing you read for information will help them to see what reading can be.

Encourage an opinion

Talk about books when you've finished reading together. Talk about the characters and what happens in a story, or what specific bit of information was most useful, but also get them to give you their opinions too. Let them tell you if they don't like a book, and why. It's OK not to like some books or to prefer reading on-screen sometimes!

Make links

As well as talking about the book itself, make links between events or information in the book and your child's own experiences: *'Do you remember when we did that ...?'*. Get them to ask questions too: *'Is that how Grandad does it too?'*.

Top tips: age 9 - 11

It's still good to share

Hearing a story read to you (rather than watching a story on TV or as a film) is hugely important for developing reading skills, but it's also a relaxing routine which prepares children for a good night's sleep. Hearing a story read out loud also means that children can have access to books that may as yet be too challenging to read alone – **you can whet the appetite!**

Open up the world of reading

Share the variety of your reading with your child: books, magazines, websites, and apps, to show how reading can help you to follow your interests and to get involved. Help them to join blogs, online communities and clubs that link to their hobbies whether it's swimming, football, dance or music.

Enjoy! 😊