

Tip Sheet

Assisting Reading Development: A Guide

Choosing a Book

Decodable Books

Ideally, reading books should link in with the program of teaching reading and spelling in the classroom. Initially, children should practise their reading using decodable books chosen by their teachers or parents. These books contain words made of the letter-sound associations taught in a sequential phonics reading and spelling program.

Decodable reading books follow a very structured, systematic introduction of new sounds and letters. They start with small regular words. Regular words are words where the sound / letter relationships are the ones the child has been taught. These small regular words are often referred to as 'CVC' words. The term 'CVC' means Consonant, Vowel, Consonant - words like cat, dog, leg, pin, bus. Once children can read these they then move on to reading longer words, like cobweb, and words with digraphs (two letters representing one sound), like ship. For example, once the child has been taught the sounds that link with these letters: s, a, t, m, o, n – they can read the following sentence: Sam sat on Tam.

Examples of Decodable Books: Phonics Books UK; Little Learners Love Literacy readers, InitialLit readers, Sounds-Write readers, SPELD SA Phonic Books.

Although these books may not seem too exciting at first, children will enjoy practising their newly acquired decoding skills and being successful readers. While children are developing their reading skills using decodable books, parents and teachers can also read a wide variety of longer and more complex stories to their children.

Other Books

Once the child has a strong understanding of the alphabetic principle (how the sounds in language map onto letters and letter patterns), they can begin to read a wider range of books. The five finger rule can help you find a reading book at the appropriate level.

- Choose the book your child will read (or have them choose one from a range of books).
- Choose a typical page towards the middle of the book (with lots of words and not too many pictures).
- Ask your child to read aloud and each time they come to a word that they don't know, hold up one finger out of sight).
- If you end up with five fingers before the end of the page, stop reading the book and choose another one, or finish reading the book to your child.
- If you have no fingers up by the end of the page then it's probably too easy, if you have one or two then it's probably the right level.

Pause-Prompt-Praise

Pause for 3 seconds when errors are made to give the child a chance to self-correct.

Prompt when the child doesn't self-correct. Model how to segment the word into the letters or letter groups that go with each sound as you sound-out the word. Move your finger along the word as you pronounce the sound each letter or letter group makes. Then blend (or put together) the sounds as you move your finger along the word in a quicker motion.

Example 1:

Child: "The quick brown fox j..." (2-3 seconds)

Parent: "j-u-m-p-s, jumps"



Example 2:

Child: "The boy said..." (2-3 seconds)

Parent: "th-a-n-k, thank"



Tip Sheet

Assisting Reading Development: A Guide (continued)

Prompting can also include:

- identifying the first sound and encouraging the child to sound-out the rest of the word
- helping the child to break-up the word into syllables
- providing the word to assist reading fluency

Use your finger to cover each chunk as you pronounce the syllables.

Praise the child's attempts at reading. Use encouraging words when they have a go at a difficult word, have no or few errors, read fluently, finish the page or the sentence, or put in a lot of effort.

Paired Reading

Start reading together. You may need to adjust your reading pace so that your child is not shadowing what you say. When they make a mistake, stop reading and let them have a go. Use Pause-Prompt-Praise at this point.

Another variation on Paired Reading is turntaking. Negotiate with your child the amount of text you will each read. For example, you read a sentence, your child reads a sentence.

Repeated Oral Reading

Repeated oral reading develops speed of accurate reading or fluency. The child reads the same passage aloud until they make no errors and can read with speed and correct intonation. Once the passage is read with no errors, you will need to time how fast your child reads using a stopwatch. They can then be encouraged to "Beat the Clock" by reading quickly and using expression.

A warning about using picture and context clues

Good readers don't need to rely on pictures and context clues because they can decode (segment and blend sounds to form words). Research shows that poor readers tend to over-rely on one strategy, such as the use of context clues or visually guessing (often using the first and last letters of the word), to the exclusion of more appropriate strategies. These students find reading effortful and because their accuracy is poor, they also struggle with reading comprehension, fluency, spelling, and writing.

It has been estimated that only one out of every four words can be predicted using context. Content words are the most difficult to predict – only about 10% can be predicted – and these are generally the words that students really need to make sense of the text. So discourage your child from guessing and focus on the word attack skills that will help them to develop a stronger understanding of the reading process.