

What can you do at home?

- Children can benefit tremendously from being read to aloud. Studies show that children who are read to aloud are more likely to do better in school both academically and socially.
- Effective reading aloud time is all about creating a positive reading experience to engage children, so you will want to model your enthusiasm for books and reading for them.
- Being familiar with the book you are going to read is crucial to reading aloud well. When you are not prepared, you will stumble over words and phrases and the experience will not be as pleasant.
- Don't just read to your children; interact with them. Ask questions about what you have just read or the pictures they have been shown. This will help improve comprehension of the story.
- When choosing books to read aloud, strike a balance between following the children's' preferences and inviting them to try new types of books to expand their horizons and spark new interests. Say, "this looks like a good story. Let's give it a try!"
- Keep reading to and with your children, even once they can read well independently. Who says they're too old for a bedtime story?
- If they do struggle to read alone and are otherwise ready to do a little more, try reading one page and then reading the next - this can help bridge the gap.
- As their role models, the more children see you reading, the more they might decide to do the same. Consider holding a weekly 'reading club' as a family – an hour where you turn gadgets off and grab a paperback each - try sweetening the blow with some chocolates or popcorn the first few times.
- Do the voices! Try to make sure each character talks differently – this makes the story come to life for the listeners. You could try making them talk higher or deeper, faster or slower, or even in different accents. If you have trouble thinking up voices, ask your child to give you ideas for how a certain character might talk – they could even read one character's lines for you...
- Make sure you have a regular slot in which to read 'every day'. This makes sure you don't forget about it and stops everyone forgetting the plot! (This idea is used by lots of soaps, where there are lots of different stories to keep in mind.)
- If you have a regular reading time every day, choose a longer chapter book. It'll be more of an experience for you and your listeners, and helps build their memory and understanding.
- Keep them guessing -ask questions every so often to find out what everyone thinks might happen next. This can help to build the suspense and make it more interesting for your children.
- Make sure they're still with you - recap what's happened every few pages to make sure your listeners know what's going on (especially important if they are younger).
- Always leave them wanting more - quit reading at an exciting point in the story – maybe at the end of a chapter or even in the middle of a sentence! TV dramas use cliffhangers like this to make sure their audience comes back tomorrow to find out what happened – yours will too.
- Don't turn your backs on picture books too soon – these can still be fun for older children.
- Take them to the local library for a cost-free choice of book. There will be no pressure to purchase and they can experiment without risking wasting money.
- Grab a gadget. Not everyone's a fan of e-readers but, what children read is more important than how they read it and we know that many a modern child is swayed by more screen time... plus an e-reader's in-built dictionary and the ability to change font sizes to suit might increase a book's appeal.
- Look at film-book tie-ins – as an adult, sometimes watching the film before reading the book can ruin things but for kids, it might make a book that they would otherwise find too challenging less intimidating.