

Reading at home

PARENTS' GUIDE TO FLUENCY

Reading fluency means the smoothness, or flow of reading. When children recognise most of the words on the page (without breaking them down into individual sounds) they are ready to practise fluency.

Children who read with fluency find comprehension (being able to understand what they read) much easier. You can help your child become a more fluent reader by reading to your child, listening to your child read and re-reading favourite stories together. Here are some steps to help your child become a fluent reader.

Help your child's automatic word recognition

Listen out for words your child does not recognise. Any words your child sounds out, mispronounces, or replaces with a completely different word is a word your child does not recognise.

This is a natural part of reading and your child may just need encouragement to feel confident that they are sounding a word out correctly (just double-check your child knows what the word means). More advanced readers will self-correct. This means they may say the wrong word to begin with, but as they continue to read the sentence, they will recognise that the word they have said does not make sense and will correct their own mistake.

If your child is struggling to sound out a word, or does not notice their mistake, help your child sound out the word and explain what the word means. Ask your child to re-read the sentence so they can practise saying the new word correctly.

It is important for children to work on the pace of their reading (not too fast, or too slow). Re-reading a story is important in developing reading pace. As children become more familiar with a text, they will have less 'work' to do to recognise all the words, reading it will feel more comfortable and they will be able to read at a steady pace.

Help your child's reading rhythm

Rhythm is being able to know when to pause and when to stop. Help your child learn to pause. This is often guided by commas, but not always. For example,

It was a sunny day and the sky was blue.

To make understanding easier, this sentence would be best broken down into:

It was a sunny day and the sky was blue.

Most importantly, make sure your child can notice where there is a full stop before starting a new sentence.

Children often recognise that they haven't read with the correct rhythm because the sentence won't make sense. They will then re-read and self-correct. If your child is not able to self-correct, read the sentence or paragraph to your child showing them when to pause and stop. Then ask your child to read. Just like learning the rhythm of a song, your child will be able to copy your rhythm. Over time, your child will become increasingly confident in recognising rhythm when reading.

Help your child's reading expression

Expression is the way we choose to say the words we read. There are many ways to read words: quickly, slowly, loudly, quietly, seriously, factually, comically, excitedly etc. There are usually clues in the text we are reading. For example, a story would need different expression to an information text, while a funny story would need different expression to a scary story. When characters are speaking, the reader is usually told how to read the speech through words such as shouted, whispered, cried, giggled etc.

Check your child's reading expression matches the story and check your child is reading speech correctly. Again, children will often re-read and self-correct, but if they do not notice clues for reading expression, point them out and if necessary demonstrate how to read the text (the more you 'act' with your reading voice the better). Help your child choose different voices for different characters. Even when small children cannot read stories themselves, they will often copy the voices their parents use for different characters when looking at the pictures. This will really help your child's reading development.

Often texts use different fonts, capital letters, or slanted writing called 'italics' to show that a word should be read in a different way, or with greater emphasis. Check that your child can spot these words and read them correctly. If necessary, demonstrate then ask your child to re-read.

Any time you can spend reading to your child, reading with your child, or listening to your child read will help your child's reading skills develop. If you don't have access to new books, re-reading familiar stories is just as important for reading fluency...

happy reading!

