

# Reading Strategies

Before you start to read with your child you could ask them or remind them about what they can do if they are unsure of a word. Phonic strategies are the priority here as we want children to use what they've learnt in phonics lessons and not guess. Here are some useful strategies to use:

## **Pointing to the words as they read them**

Children need to point to the words when they read to make sure they don't add any extra words or omit any words. We call this 1:1 correspondence. When a child is secure with this they need to take their finger out and read with their eyes (usually about red band but a child can use their finger for longer if necessary). This is because reading without pointing should be pacier and more fluent, less robot like! A good prompt once pointing has stopped is, 'Read like you're talking.' Modelling by the adult of what a good reader sounds like can also be useful. Once a child stops pointing to the words, they can put their hands at the bottom of the pages and just bring their finger/fingers in if they are unsure of a word. Having their hand position at the bottom of the pages is also really useful for children to be independent and turn the pages themselves. Phrasing will come once children pick up pace with their reading. This can be modelled to them as children aren't always sure which words go together and where they need to take a breath

## **Sound a word out (decoding)**

If the word is not a Harder to Read and Spell Word/Common Exception Word (e.g., go, he) they can sound it out e.g., 'c-a-t' and then blend the word. Robot arms can also be used to model sounding and blending the word and the child can repeat this or they might do them by themselves. As a child becomes more familiar with their sounds a useful prompt might be 'Do a fast sound out' as this can make it easier to blend the sounds.

## **Chunking**

As words get a bit longer, children can chunk a word by breaking in into smaller, more manageable parts. They can do this out loud or in their heads. Early on, some children will find it useful to use their 2 pointy fingers to make windows around the bit they are going to sound out and blend this part before doing the next part e.g., Making a window around 'jump' and sounding and blending this part before add the suffix 'ing' to make jumping or splitting longer words e.g., moonlight into moon + light. It can take a bit of time for children to know where to split the word but if they are unsure

you can guide them. Some children find plurals harder to read so e.g., on the word chairs, you could say to them, 'cover the s' (they then read 'chair') and then add the 's' on.

### **Cross-checking**

It is really important that children don't cover the pictures up as they can use them to confirm what they are reading by glancing at them after they have read a word or sentence as needed.

### **Self-correcting**

Good readers will self-correct without being prompted. Children need to learn to notice if a they say a word and the sounds don't match or if they say and word and it doesn't make sense. If a child doesn't notice a mistake, a low-level prompt from the adult could be, 'Check it.' If they are not sure what to check a higher-level prompt might be, 'Check the sounds match,' or 'Does that sound right?' Lots of praise for checking will encourage children to check more and by sometimes telling them what they did explicitly e.g., 'You noticed that the sounds didn't match and you checked them and made them match,' will encourage them to do this more often. Sometimes a quick thumbs up when they self-correct will suffice and won't interrupt the flow of their reading.

### **Reading back**

Re-reading a word, phrase or sentence is a useful strategy either when the person reading wants to confirm what they've read or they've noticed that their reading doesn't sound right and they want to check it.

### **Reading on**

As a child becomes a more proficient reader they will find it useful to read on and go back. This strategy can be useful when they have tried sounding and blending a word and they're still unsure what it is. They know that their reading needs to make sense and by reading on and going back they might be confirming the word or using extra information to work out if it looks right and it makes sense.

### **Using your window**

A child can also use this strategy before reading as a tool to feeling more confident with their reading e.g., if you know they sometimes forget a harder to read and spell word that they've been taught, you might say, 'Make a window around the word e.g., the word 'the' , 'Brilliant, can you find it again in your book?' (Keep repeating until they seem confident). Or you could do the same exercise with a particular sound that they sometimes forget.

### **How their reading sounds**

Phrasing their reading will come once children pick up pace with their reading. This can be modelled to them as children aren't always sure which words go together and where they need to take a breath. Encourage children to notice the range of punctuation in their books and what different punctuation means. You might model using expression when there's an exclamation mark or using intonation and letting your voice get slightly higher on a question mark.

### **Reading for meaning**

It is very important that children understand what they are reading. Have they grasped the main message/theme of the book if there is one? Asking your child questions before, during and after reading will help them to do this. You can ask them whether or not they enjoyed the book and why. Once children are confident at decoding, the emphasis will be much more about comprehension and the understanding of texts.

Using 'a toolkit of strategies' with an emphasis on phonics, will ensure that your child becomes a reader for life. All their learning through out school will be much easier for them if they are a competent reader. We hope you find this guide useful. Happy reading!