

Putnoe Primary School

Guide to reading with your child

Ways to help your child get the most from reading

*Making sense of phonics,
book banding explained, ideas for
developing understanding, and questions
to ask your child when reading.*

Why is reading so important?

Here are 5 reasons why helping your child learn to read is important:

- **Reading helps build communication skills**
Learning to read can have a positive impact on your child's ability to communicate and interact with others, as well as improving speaking, listening and writing skills.
- **Reading opens the imagination**
Reading is a way of unlocking a world of creativity and imagination. New worlds and new experiences and pleasures are achieved when you can read.
- **Reading has a positive impact on progress at school**
Reading is an important step in your child's education because it unlocks the ability to understand information in other subjects, meaning deeper understanding and faster progression.
- **Reading can improve mental health and well-being**
Frequent reading for pleasure can help to increase your child's well-being. Your child's favourite book characters can often be role models and may help your child empathise with others. By reading, children can learn about problems other children face and how to deal with issues.
- **Reading is a fundamental life skill**
In our society, we rely on being able to read to perform everyday tasks independent-

'PISA results (OECD, 2011) show that 15 year olds who read for enjoyment daily are one and a half years of schooling ahead of those who do not read daily.'

What are Book Bands?

Many reading schemes use coloured book bands to indicate the level of their books. But what do these colours mean? What if your child is on Yellow band but their friend is on Green? How long will it take for your child to be ready to move on to the next band? Can your child pick their favourite colours instead?

Book bands may seem confusing at first, but they are a common system for grouping books according to their level of reading difficulty. Your child may start reading books at the lowest level (lilac or pink), and move on to the next bands once their teacher feels they are ready.

Using book bands helps children, parents and teachers know which books are suitable to read at each stage of the child's reading journey. It's important to remember that it isn't a race to the finish, and that reading is about understanding as well as being able to successfully read (decode) words.

Lilac—Level 0	These books are wordless and are fully illustrated to prepare children for reading.
Pink—Level 1A	Learners start to apply their early word reading skills to read simple sentences. There is a single sentence on every left-hand page. Content at these early levels is very much based around famil-
Red—Level 2A	Learners are developing their confidence to tackle slightly longer sentences. These books have 1-2 one-line sentences per page.
Yellow—Level 3	Sentences are slightly more complex with more developed storylines and non-fiction texts.
Blue—Level 4	The quantity of text gradually increases to approximately six lines per page. Books may include some abstract terms and non-fiction will include some sub-headings.
Green—Level 5	Stories are less reliable on familiar experiences and include more sophisticated humour and suspense. There are a larger number of characters, and events sometimes continue over several pag-
Orange—Level 6	The meaning of text is still straight forward, but readers should be able to understand without needing literal explanations.
Turquoise—Level 7	Books include longer descriptions and feature a wider range of punctuation and unusual vocabulary.
Purple—Level 8	Readers may be able to pick up themes and books may have short chapters. There are more opportunities for readers to ask and answer questions about characters.
Gold—Level 9	Books contain challenging sentence structures, with more unknown words per page. There may be more than one point of view presented and information is suggested rather than spelled out.
White—Level 10	Readers may be surprised or have their expectations challenged. There may be more than one point of view presented and information is suggested rather than spelled out.

How to read with your child

You may know that it's really important to support and encourage reading at home, but what do you need to do when your child brings a book home, and how can you pick up where the teacher left off?

The summary of key findings in *Reading for Enjoyment: A literature review* (2016, National Literacy Trust) shows that you can really make a difference.

"Parental beliefs, attitudes and behaviours directly support their child's reading for enjoyment and have also been linked with higher reading motivations."

Reading for enjoyment: A literature review (2016, National Literacy Trust)

Here are five steps to success when reading with your child:

1. Create a routine

It can be hard to find the perfect moment to sit down and enjoy reading together. If you can, get into a routine of reading at the same time each day so that you are more likely to stick to a daily reading session. Reading together at bedtime is a popular choice, but you may find early morning or after school sessions more successful if your child is tired in the evenings.

2. Make time to read little and often

Reading together doesn't have to take a long time; just ten minutes a day makes a positive impact. If your child is really engaged in the reading session, continue for longer, but if they are tired after a busy day at school just read a few pages to maintain the routine.

3. Prepare a reading environment

Learning to read can be hard and it feels even harder if there are lots of distractions at home. Try to find a quiet space—no TV, no siblings or pets making noise. Also think about being comfortable, in a place with enough light. Feeling relaxed will help your child to enjoy the experience even more.

4. Get comfortable, engage with and support reading

Get settled and think about whether you are both sitting in good positions to see the text and that you are able to support as necessary during the session. Your main role is to check accuracy of word reading/decoding.

5. Praise after reading

It's important to offer encouragement whilst your child is reading, try and praise at least one achievement after reading. This ends on a positive note and helps your child look forward to the next session.



What if English isn't your home language?
guage?

For families whose first language isn't English, here are some additional tips for supporting your child's reading:

- ◇ After your child has read to you in English, it is very valuable to talk about the book in your home language. You can talk about the pictures, the meaning of words and even retell the story, or summarise the content of a non-fiction book. This will help your child to develop their vocabulary and comprehension skills.
- ◇ Use a good quality bilingual dictionary so that you can look up the meanings of the words you don't know. Picture dictionaries are also a fun way for your child to learn new words in English.
- ◇ If you are unsure about the sounds your child is being taught to read (phonics), please refer to the video on our school website www.putnoeprimary.co.uk

Encouraging reading for pleasure

As well as being good at reading and achieving good grades at school, it's really important that your child enjoys reading. Here are some top tips

1. Be a good role model—let your child see you reading, and enjoying your reading, to show that reading at home isn't just for homework.
2. Provide books related to your child's interests and have plenty of reading material available at home that they can choose from in their own time. If your child is struggling with a particular book or genre, help them find a topic or character that they are interested in, even if this means reading magazines or comics—the more reading at home the better!
3. Talk about the books your child is reading. It might help to ask questions about the books to help develop enthusiasm and comprehension.
4. Show your child that you are interested in the characters and storylines from their books to help build excitement for finding out more about the characters.
5. Even if your child is an able, independent reader, it's good to still read to them. Reading to your child from an early age helps to create a bond and a positive memory of reading, so it's important to continue reading to your child, especially bedtime stories.
6. During a reading session, get into character and put on funny voices if it helps your child to enjoy the story. You could also try pretending to be a character all day!



It is what you read when you don't have to that determines what you will be when you can't help it. Oscar Wilde

7. If during a reading session, you both really enjoyed a book, don't be afraid to reread it. You might learn something new each time.
8. Spend time in book shops enjoying looking at books and let your child pick the ones they find most exciting. Many bookshops have fantastic displays and decorations to help children get involved with reading.
9. Join in with the events at your local library so that your child can join in with exciting activities with other children. Often libraries offer author events which can be great fun, and also inspiring.

Once you learn to read, you will
forever be free Frederick Douglass

10. When talking to your child after school, be enthusiastic to see which book they have brought home and show that you are looking forward to hearing about it.
11. Encourage drawing, writing and game playing linked to book content. This helps your child engage with stories and shows that learning to read isn't just about sounding out words.
12. Try and make 'reading together' time a special time of day, where you chat and enjoy one another's company. This helps your child look forward to reading at home.
13. Reading little and often can sometimes become a bit repetitive, so encourage changes such as reading in a different room of the house each day.

The world belongs to those
who read. Rick Holland

Using your child's reading record

Your child will come home with a reading record which is for you to fill in with them at home. Filling in pages of blank grids every day might seem a bit tedious at first so here are some ideas and examples of the types of comments you could write:

- **Positive praise**

Rewarding comments can be directed to your child and help to raise their self-esteem and morale. For example, Excellent concentration Ben.

- **Tracking Progress**

Create a record of new vocabulary that your child finds and any key achievements. For example, Helen was interested in new words 'bustle' and 'ponder' - we checked the meanings in a dictionary, or Emily remembered to pause at the full stops.

- **Communicating with the teacher**

A brief note in the reading record is an effective way to communicate with your child's class teacher. For example, Rachel only read a few pages today as she wasn't feeling well.

- **Asking Questions**

It's not always possible to have a discussion with the teacher in school, so using the reading record can be a handy way to ask questions. For example, we really enjoyed the story about the snail, can we have that one again please?

- **Noting difficult words**

If your child finds a word hard, make a list and practice reading these words with your child every time you write in the reading record.

- **Tracking a variety of skills**

It can be hard to avoid repetition and to think of different things to write. As well as difficult words, try to comment on fluency, accuracy, comprehension, stamina, expression, engagement, vocabulary, grammar and punctuation.

Helping Struggling Readers

If you are worried that your child is struggling with their reading, you could try these ideas:

- Try to observe and reflect on what it is your child is struggling with—do you think they are lacking a phonics skill? A comprehension skill? Or is it a memory retention issue?
- Talk to the class teacher about your concerns and use your child's reading record to communicate any worries.
- Remember that learning to read isn't a reflection of intellect—it's about learning a specific and challenging set of skills, so be patient as learning these won't happen overnight.
- Don't allow your child to see your anxiety or frustration about their struggles. They might pick up on these and start to worry.
- If your child is stuck on a specific word, don't be afraid to tell them the word and move on.
- Take the pressure off the situation—it's okay to read together or take turns to each read a page.
- Be positive—give plenty of praise and encouragement, even for small steps of success.
- Make sure you are up to date with your child's optician appointments—vision difficulties can sometimes go unnoticed and may affect reading skills.
- If you are concerned that your child might be dyslexic, talk to your child's teacher and ask for advice. See www.bdadyslexia.org.uk for further guidance.
- Encourage your child to read by helping them find authors, topics or genres that they enjoy and are interested in. It's important to keep being positive about the reading experience. Give lots of praise for reading, even after your child has read magazines or texts other than school reading books.

Troubleshooting Tips

By the time we get home from school my daughter is shattered—do I really need to read with her then?

School can be exhausting and children need 'downtime' to play and relax at home. She won't enjoy reading if she can barely keep their eyes open! Perhaps try reading for a few minutes in the mornings or make it part of your weekend routine—the key is little and often.

I'm a single parent and I find it hard to engage with my son's reading. I don't have time to read novels myself, but I want to be a good role model. What can I do?

You don't have to be a literary expert to be a good role model. Even reading newspapers or magazines can show your child that reading can be an enjoyable part of a daily routine. Try and find a subject that you both enjoy reading about and share this together.

My daughter has been reading books from the same book band and I'm worried that she isn't progressing fast enough. How long should it take to move through a band?

There isn't a set amount of time, so try and avoid comparing your child's progress to other children or siblings. Even if your child is reading confidently, it's important that they can understand the books as well as being able to read the words. It's not just about finishing every book in a book band, it's about comprehension of stories and text. Trust the judgement of your child's teacher—they will be checking the progress of each child and will know when it's time for your daughter to move onto harder books.

My child seems to want to race through the text and often makes lots of mistakes by guessing at words. What should I do?

You need to be explicit and tell your child to slow down. Explain how important it is to be able to read words accurately. If they are racing through these words, guessing and making mistakes, do they understand the content of the text? It's important to be able to read words and understand what they mean.

Understanding Curriculum Expectations

Reading to open the imagination is one thing, but what does your child need to be able to do according to the demands of the curriculum? Here is an overview of the skills the teacher will be helping your child to build and the goals they will be working towards to meet the expectations of the national curriculum for England.

What is expected of your child in reception?

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) curriculum contains a specific goal as follows:

“Children read and understand simple sentences. They use phonic knowledge to decode regular words and then read them aloud accurately. They demonstrate understanding when talking with others about what they have read.”

Other aspects of reading that might be seen or taught within reception may include:

- Hearing and saying the initial sounds in words
- Segmenting the sounds in simple words and blending them together
- Beginning to read words and simple sentences
- Using vocabulary and forms of speech that are increasingly influenced by experience

Reading a good book is taking a journey. Emma Gulliford

What is expected of your child at Key Stage 1?

The national curriculum for reading a Key Stages 1 and 2 focuses on 2 areas:

Word Reading—both the working out of the pronunciation of unfamiliar printed words (decoding) and the recognition of familiar printed words.

Comprehension—reading widely across both fiction and non-fiction to help children develop knowledge and understanding of themselves and the world in which they live, to establish an appreciation and love of reading, and to gain knowledge across the curriculum.

The aim is that all children:

- Read easily, fluently and with good understanding
- Develop the habit of reading widely and often, for both pleasure and information
- Acquire a wide vocabulary, an understanding of grammar and knowledge of linguistic conventions for reading, writing and spoken language.
- Appreciate our rich and varied literary heritage.

How and when will your child be tested?

Phonics screening check

At the end of Year 1 your child will have a phonics screening check. This is designed to assess whether your child has learned to decode (read) words, but test understanding or meanings of the words. Children will need to read a list of 40 words aloud to the teacher. Twenty will be real words with the rest pseudo words (artificial words) to ensure that children use their phonics skills instead of their memory when reading.

National tests

In Year 2 at the end of Key Stage 1, National Tests take place during the first full teaching week of May each year, spread across a few days. The reading test has one paper lasting one hour. Your child will be asked to answer questions about three different texts (often one fiction, one non-fiction and one poem). Some questions will be answered by ticking boxes, and others will require more detailed written answers. The questions will focus on the knowledge of vocabulary and comprehension, including making inferences from the text.