

Bringing a Book Home from School

When a child first brings home a reading book that they have been asked to read with you, it may be an activity that you have looked forward to for some time. It may also be one that carries specific concerns. How much should they read each day? What do I do if they can't read a word, do I make them sound it out or tell them? What if they can't read any of the book? Helping your child to read can seem like a daunting task to many parents.

Then there is the problem of comparing one's child with other children in their class. Please don't; this is not a race. Hearing about how well your child's classmates are doing, from their parents, can make you anxious and concerned about your child's progress, it's natural. Just remember, all children develop at different rates, all have strengths, and all have weaknesses. If you were frequently compared to another person negatively, how would that affect your self-esteem? Just enjoy the closeness that reading together brings and know that by supporting your child, you are ensuring their progress.

The following points and activities are intended for children who are learning to read, and many of the activities will be beneficial for older children too. I have arranged the activities in a "question and answer" form to help you select the areas that are of most interest to you or that cause anxiety.

1. Where and when should I hear my child read?

Choose somewhere quiet to read away from distraction. Don't make your child read with the television blaring, other people talking, younger brothers/sisters demanding attention. It is easier said than done but if you can find the time and place where the two of you can share a book your child will come to look upon reading as a special time that they will look forward to. Your child may not wish to read in the evening when they are tired. First thing in the morning may be better.

2. What should I do if my child doesn't want to read?

If your child doesn't want to read, don't make them. You might just read to them or let them tell you the story by looking at the pictures. Using picture clues is an important reading skill.

Talk about the pictures, ask your child questions about them and point out small details in them.

3. Wouldn't it be best to leave "reading" to the school?

No! Research shows that the earlier parents become involved in their children's reading practices, the more profound the results and the longer-lasting the effects (Mullis, Mullis, Cornille et al., 2004). Additionally, of all school subjects, reading is the subject where children make the most progress when parents are involved (Senechal & LeFevre, 2002). If you go onto the Internet, you will find so much research demonstrating the positive and substantial effects of parents supporting their child in learning to read. The influence of the parent is enormous. Be sure that your child understands your confidence in them. Never let them think that you expect them to fail.