

## HELPING YOUR CHILD READ – TIPS FOR PARENTS/CARERS

1. The aim of this programme is to get a reluctant reader **started** by teaching a wide range of core sight vocabulary (that is, the most commonly occurring words – lists of these can be supplied by school staff), together with some useful words for your particular child – names of the family and so on. You should also use words which occur in the child's reading book, for example, Ben, Lad, Kate, Tom, Biff, Kipper.
2. Choose a quiet time to work with your child. This may be right after school once they have had a snack or just before bed at night. You should plan to spend about **5 to 10 minutes** with your child. Ten minutes should be the absolute maximum. You may find that your child is becoming irritable before this time. In this case, stop and try again the following day. You may also find that your child wants to go on for more than 10 minutes. I would not recommend this as it is important to keep the child's interest and the best way to do this is to stop while they are still eager to continue. With long periods of the same activity motivation is easily lost.
3. Decide what rewards you are going to use. I would recommend sweets or money because these are so flexible and easily dispensed. If you prefer not to use these you can have the child work for points which can be cashed in for a more substantial reward but this needs a fairly sophisticated child for it to work (aged about 8 years plus). You need to choose a reward which the child will really want to earn so it should be something they don't have ready access to at other times.
4. You are going to give the child a token every time they read a word on a card accurately. A token would usually be something like a piece of Lego, a button or a counter – anything which you have plenty of and can give to the child without interrupting showing them the word cards.
5. Decide how many 'tokens' the child will need in order to gain a reward. I would recommend 5 tokens is worth one smartie or 2p.
6. The rewards should be modest as the child is going to earn a lot of them!
7. For the first session choose three cards. One of these cards could be a word already known to the child. Now you are ready to teach the words:
  - Show them the first card.
  - Say: 'What is this word?'
  - The child reads the word.
  - Praise them if they get it right. Give them one token. They need to recognise it instantly. At this stage you should not be encouraging them to sound out the word.
  - If they get it wrong, say 'No, the word is.....'. Pause then present the card again, and say, 'What is this word?' Praise them if they get the word correct, but they do not get a token.
  - Put the card down and chose another.
  - Show this card and repeat the process.
8. Continue presenting these three cards until the child recognises these three cards immediately they are shown. Remember to mix up the words so they do not learn them in a particular order.
9. Add a couple more words when they are very familiar with the words they know and keep adding until you have about 20 words.
10. When they recognise words very easily take them out but review them about once a week.
11. Your child may have particular difficulty remembering some words. For example, the words: there, that, what, where, want are often difficult for children to remember. You should make sure that these words are always included.
12. Once they have a range of core sight vocabulary learned by this method you should start introducing real books which have these words in them. These could

either by books from a class reading scheme (make sure it is one based on a 'controlled vocabulary' – for example, Oxford Reading Tree, Ginn 360, Ladybird) or you could make a book of your own. Take photographs of your child and make books about them which use the vocabulary you have taught. It is very important that the child appreciates that they are learning the words for a purpose – that is, reading books for pleasure.

13. Once your child has a core sight vocabulary of about 200 words you will no longer need this approach and they will have the confidence and words to go on to read real books and to use a phonic approach to supplement their ability to make educated guesses about unknown words.

Special thanks to Lyn Fry

© Dr. Jeremy Monsen Chartered and Registered Psychologist (07850 556886)

Dr. Jeremy Monsen