

Tips for parents sharing books with children who are just starting to read for themselves

By Prue Goodwin, Lecturer in Literacy Education & Children's Books, Reading University

The early stages of learning to read are very important. Children gradually acquire all the complex skills necessary to recognise words and then to make meanings. Becoming a confident reader takes time – longer for some than for others. Schools have a curriculum to follow with every child so the time you spend sharing books with them alone is indispensable. You don't need to do anything different to be of great support to your child. Read aloud to your child and snuggle up with books - just as you did when they were younger.

- First share the whole book with the children with only a little comment on the story and pictures, letting the children wallow in the pleasure of the experience.
- After the first read through, discuss the story with comments or questions such as: Did you enjoy that story? That was a funny thing to happen, wasn't it?
- Share the story again, asking the children to tell you what they like on each page.
- Always explore the pictures and relish the language of the super books produced for young readers. Return to gaze at the pictures and talk about how much you enjoyed the story.

Apart from enjoying the books together, here are five further tips for helping your child to become a reader:

1. Read to them from all sorts of books – picture books, longer stories, non-fiction and poetry.
2. Let children select which book you will share from a collection of books. Don't worry if they chose something over and over again. You can always have a rule – two books, one that they have chosen and one chosen by you.
3. It is nice to own books but also use your local library where you can borrow lots of different stories, free of charge. Librarians will help with suggestions about what books to choose next.
4. Revisit some of the lovely books you read to them before they started school. They may have a go at reading some of the words for themselves now and familiarity with the story will help them to recognise the words.
5. Encourage them to play at being the characters, to draw pictures and to make up a bit more story.

Ends

Prue Goodwin biog

Prue Goodwin taught in primary and middle schools for over twenty years and was then an advisory teacher for language development before taking up a post as lecturer in at the University of Reading. She went part time at the University in 2002 in order to work freelance. Her freelance work includes running courses, speaking at conferences, acting as a consultant to publishers of children's books and researching literacy development in schools. Prue edited *The Literate Classroom*, a collection of articles by leading teacher educators, the second edition of which was published by David Fulton Publishers in 2005. *The Articulate Classroom*, on speaking and listening, was published in 2001 and *Literacy through Creativity*, in 2004. Prue regularly returns to the classroom to introduce children to a range of literature and to encourage wide, voracious reading.