

Top ten reading tips for your young learners

Nick Dawson – Academic Consultant

A reading book is a doorway into a world of adventure, challenge, discovery, imagination, bravery, happiness, disappointment, and fear. A reading book is not an ugly collection of black shapes on a white page. The adventure of reading involves using the black shapes to discover a wonderful world.

When teaching reading, we should focus on this adventure in imagination, rather than the decoding of black shapes into sounds. Our aim is for children to enjoy reading, so focus on the fun rather than reading failure.

1. Reading books contain voices, so start reading by listening.

Children have good listening comprehension. All the stories are recorded. Let them listen to the recordings, with books open looking at the pictures.

2. Listen and use pictures to help with understanding.

Pictures are not just for decoration, but to assist comprehension and add to the atmosphere of the story. When children read and understand, they should imagine pictures in their brains.

3. Listen and follow the text with your finger.

Before children can vocalise text, they can listen and 'finger follow' the voice on the recording. This is an important learning step towards reading aloud. If you STOP the recording in the middle of a sentence, ask children to guess the next word, or the next part of the sentence. After a paragraph, ask children to speculate about the next paragraph.

4. Find words for people, activities and things.

As children learn to recognise words, ask them to find and touch words in the text. Start with names with initial capital letters.

5. Listen and repeat (read aloud) parts of the text.

Don't ask children to read aloud before they have listened to and understood the text. Then play (or read) sentences from the text. Ask children to repeat whilst looking at the text.

Top ten reading tips for your young learners

Nick Dawson – Academic Consultant

6. Talk about stories, places, people and information in the books.

Encourage children to share their ideas about the stories and draw pictures of their favourite characters or scenes in the story.

7. Talk about your opinions and feelings about the book.

Children should become emotionally involved with the stories they read. Are the characters good or bad? Do they make good decisions? What would you do in this situation?

8. Think about the next part of the book.

As children begin to enjoy a story, ask them what is going to happen in the story. Ask them what will happen to each character. Encourage them to hypothesise the next part. Then, when they read, they will be comparing the text with their hypothesis.

9. Read books again and again.

Children love to repeat a story they have enjoyed. Each time they re-read, their reading will be more fluent and their comprehension will be deeper.

10. Draw, colour, write and share your own books.

After reading, children might be inspired to make their own story books which they can write and illustrate. They might use narrative text or pictures with speech bubbles, if this is easier. The learner-produced books can make good 'extra reading' material for other students.