

Reading Centre

making a difference



Helping young children learn to read
What parents can do



Queensland
Government

This booklet is to help parents* of children in Prep to Year 2 support and build their children's literacy confidence at home, while they are learning to read.

Throughout this booklet there are suggestions for making reading fun and interesting. These can be used when your child is reading to you but also when you are reading to your child.

Queensland state schools acknowledge that you:

- are your child's first teacher
- want your child to succeed as a reader
- have a vested interest in your child achieving literacy success.

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* In this document, the word 'parent' is meant to include guardians, caregivers and other family members who can help children foster a love of reading.

Building strong parent partnerships

Parents play an integral role in the education of their children. Much of what children learn takes place through everyday experiences at home.

Children's literacy and numeracy development can be improved when parents encourage learning through everyday activities. Modelling literacy and numeracy behaviours helps children recognise the value of these skills.

Looks like

- children watching and listening to parents read
- children reading and talking about stories with parents
- discussing ideas in books and magazines together
- encouraging children to think and ask questions

Overview

This booklet consists of four parts. The content for each part is identified below.

Part 1

What is literacy?

- Welcome
- Literacy in everyday life

Part 2

Understanding the reading process?

- The five core reading skills

Part 3

Stage of reading

- Early phases of reading development
- Before reading
- Making reading fun

Part 4

Listening to your child

- During reading
- After reading

The process for supporting reading

There are three stages that you can work through when reading with your child. These stages will be explored in the modules.

Stage 1 – Before Reading

Selecting the book
Introducing the book

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- allowing your child to select a book
- introducing the book through discussion

Stage 2 – During Reading

Reading the book
Supporting your child to read

Looks like 

- your child attempting to read the book independently
- asking questions about what is happening in the book

Stage 3 – After Reading

Discussing the book

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- discussing the book and interpret its meaning

Please note that if your child is a beginning reader, go through Stage 1 and Stage 3 as in the above table. In Stage 2, instead of your child reading to you, you will read to your child, allowing your child to join in if they feel comfortable.

Part 1 What is literacy?

Literacy is about communication; it is the ability to read and write, and to use written information appropriately in a range of contexts. This involves:

- reading and writing
- speaking and listening
- viewing and critical thinking.

Literacy also includes a person's cultural knowledge, which enables them to recognise and use language that is appropriate to different social situations.

Children benefit when given opportunities to develop their literacy skills.

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- | | | |
|------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| ▪ talking to others | ▪ reading a sign | ▪ talking about a television program |
| ▪ reading a book | ▪ viewing a website | ▪ going shopping |
| ▪ listening to a story | ▪ playing a computer game | ▪ playing a board game |
| ▪ writing a story | ▪ watching a movie | |



Part 2 Understanding the essential components for learning to read

Effective reading requires:

- phonemic awareness
- phonics
- fluency
- vocabulary knowledge
- text comprehension

Readers develop five skills to help them read and understand:

phonemic awareness

- repeats familiar rhyming verses, chants and jingles
- identifies rhyming words
- provides a word starting with a given sound
- claps the syllables of spoken words e.g. ba/na/na
- makes new words by changing sounds e.g. swap the /p/ in spin with /k/

phonics

- identifies some letter names e.g. first letter of own name
- says some of the sounds for letters in a word
- writes letters to correspond with single letter sounds
- uses knowledge of sounds to attempt to read and spell unknown words

vocabulary

- knows and uses a range of everyday words and some subject-specific words in areas of interest
- asks questions to find out meanings of unfamiliar words
- is aware that some words have multiple meanings
- uses more precise vocabulary to describe feelings and experiences

The essential components for learning to read

text comprehension

- responds to stories by connecting information and events to personal experiences
- retells events in a story
- predicts a plausible next event in a story
- talks about information in factual texts
- analyses and evaluates a character's actions/ motives in a story

fluency

- reads aloud accurately, quickly and with expression
- automatically recognises words, word parts and letter sounds
- fluent reading allows the child to focus on the meaning of what they are reading

Literacy activities to develop a child's ability to read

Parents can engage in a range of activities at home to help develop their child's reading skills.

Engaging in these activities will likely develop several of the *five skills*. Which skill, or skills, is each activity helping to develop?

Play with language by making up rhyming words.

Nurture a love of reading with your child. eg. Make regular trips to your local library to borrow books. Ask others to give books as gifts to your child. Always make reading time an enjoyable time for you both.

Read and chant nursery rhymes.

Play 'I Spy'.

I spy, with my little eye, something beginning with 'r'.

Say the sound rather than the letter name.

For younger children, use colour names rather than sounds.

Have conversations and ask questions about interesting words you encounter. eg. It says he *tumbled* down the hill. How do you think he went down the hill? It says here that she had a *good* idea. What is another word we could use besides *good*?

Read aloud to your child to provide an example of how fluent reading sounds. At times, have your child match your voice.

Discuss the meanings of unknown words that your child hears and reads.

Ask your child questions about what he or she has read.

Reading includes looking at pictures for younger children.

Point to a letter on a sign or in other reading material and ask your child to name it and/or provide the sound.

Help your child make connections between what he or she reads and similar experiences he or she has felt, seen in a movie or read in another book.

Part 3 Stages of reading

Reading is a skill which is built upon through stages. Children develop understandings and skills when they are presented with many opportunities to practise, refine and enjoy reading experiences.

Prior to school

Prior to school, children take an interest in books and the writing they see in the world around them. They imitate things they see adult readers do, such as holding the book the right way up and turning the pages carefully. They often pretend to read by using the pictures and their memory to retell stories.

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- Read aloud to your child as often as possible — this helps them learn about the value of books and expand their vocabulary.
- Encourage and praise their attempts when they pretend to read.
- Look at the illustrations and see how they help the story.
- Read favourite stories again and again — familiarity builds confidence.

Beginning readers

Beginning readers are developing an understanding of the alphabet, phonemic awareness and early aphonics while also learning a significant number of sight words. They will often read by using pictures or their memory of the story. They may identify some words but are more focused on the meaning rather than reading every word in the right way.

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- Encourage children to 'have a go' at reading and praise them.
- Talk about who the people are and what happens in the books you read together.
- Encourage them to express opinions about what happens in the story.
- Talk about the letters, sounds, words and interesting features in the things you read.

Becoming a fluent reader

As readers become fluent, they may read familiar books confidently. When they read new books, they may read slowly and deliberately as they focus on the printed word, trying to read exactly what is on the page. These readers will tell you what they think about things they have read and why they think it.

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- Continue to read to children as often as possible as they still benefit from being read to.
- Encourage them to talk about what happens in the story.
- Encourage them to express an opinion about the things they read.
- Point out and talk about the vocabulary.

Stage 1 – Before, during and after reading

Reading is a thinking process. Effective readers use strategies to understand what they read before, during and after reading.

Before reading

Selecting the book

- Browse through a small range of books (fiction and non-fiction) together.
- Talk about what the book might be about.
- Encourage your child to select the book they would most like to read.

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*Which one would you like to read today?
I wonder what each one is about.
What do you think this one is about?
This book is called _____.*

Introducing the book

Discuss the subject matter and illustrations.

- Talk about the cover.
- Browse through the book, discussing the illustrations and predicting the story-line or information.
- If possible, link the events or information to your child's experiences.

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*What do you think this book will be about?
Have you read anything else written by this author?
I wonder what this book will be like?
Let's see if the illustration will help us. Oh yes, it shows ...
I think that could be ... don't you?
Can you see why I think it's...?*

A child's enjoyment of reading

Below are some indicators that may suggest that your child is enjoying reading.

They:

- participate readily in choosing a book
- enjoy browsing through the book
- show interest in listening to the reading of the book
- turn the pages spontaneously
- seem to feel at ease
- respond positively and show enjoyment
- contribute actively to the reading
- make links with personal experiences
- identify similarities with other books or things that they have read/viewed
- ask for the book to be read again

Part 4 Listening to your child read

Responding to books during reading

The main purpose of reading is to make meaning from the text. Effective readers expect that what they read will make sense.

Stage 2 – During Reading

Reading with your child

- Support your child's attempts to read independently.
- Become a listener — wait and observe.
- Use the pause, prompt, praise strategy to help your child with difficult words.
- Ask guiding questions to encourage your child to think about what they are reading.

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Talking about what might come next:

- *I wonder why he did that? Let's see.*
- *What do you think might happen next?*

Talking about the illustration:

- *I wonder why he looks like that?*
- *How does she look?*

Talking about what has happened:

- *That's a funny thing to do. What do you think?*

Making links across the text:

- *That's just what the wolf wanted.*
- *Oh my goodness. What a thing to do! I wonder what is going to happen now? Let's find out.*

Pause Prompt Praise

The pause, prompt, praise strategy will help your child to monitor their comprehension and develop self-correcting strategies.

Pause

When your child experiences difficulty, pause before expecting an answer.

Looks like

- Give your child at least five seconds before expecting an answer.

Prompt

To help your child continue reading, give a hint. Remember, if the word is not correct after two or three prompts, say: 'The word is ...'

Looks like

- *This is a word you can sound out.*
- *What is the first sound?*
- *Now try stretching this word.*
- *Do you see the 'at' chunk in that word? Now try to read the word.*
- *What smaller parts do you see in that word? Now try to read the word.*
- Once the child has figured out the word, ask them to go back and re-read so comprehension isn't lost.

Praise

There are two main types of praise:

- explicit praise
- general praise

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Explicit

- *Fantastic, that didn't make sense at first and you corrected it.*
- *Your reading was really enjoyable to listen to today because ...*
- *Well done for trying to re-read the sentence. You are reading with so much more expression. Well done.*

General

- *Well done, you are really trying to solve this.*
- *Great work, you corrected that by yourself.*
- *I liked listening to you read. You did that really well.*

Responding to books after reading

Stage 3 – After Reading

Here are examples of language that you can use to help your child further understand the book once they've finished reading it. These statements and questions can be used if a child is reading to you or you are reading to your child.

Responding to your child's reading

- Engage in an open discussion that summarises or encourages comments about information in the book.

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That was very interesting where it said that the bear went to sleep for all of the winter months.

What did you think about that?

Was there a character you liked the most?

The character I liked the most was _____.

Why was _____ your favourite?

Was there any part of the book that you liked especially?

Why?

This reminds me of another book we read last week.

Does it remind you of another book?

Yes, they were both about _____.

Do you know anyone like that?

Have you ever felt like that?

Quick tips

Play to their strengths

- Get your child to look for letters they know in words, such as the letters in their name.
- Help children find books about their interests, e.g. if they love dogs, cars or dinosaurs, look for books on these topics.

Make it fun

- Write notes and put them under your child's pillow, dinner plate or lunchbox.
- Ask your child to make a storybook with their own pictures. They can do this on a computer or with pens and paper. Help them to write words or at least some letters in the story.
- Play "What's that?" by pointing to objects on the page and having the child name what they see or read in the story, stopping periodically to ask the child to find the picture of the object or character you just read about.

It doesn't just have to be you

- Encourage everyone in the family to read with your child — ask visitors to read as well.
- Give books as presents.

Out and about

- Talk about reading whenever possible.
- Have lots of things to read at home, or while travelling, such as comics, magazines and information books.
- Visit the local library for story telling sessions.

Make it special

- Set up a home library. A few books on a special shelf are a great start. And it doesn't have to be expensive — look for second-hand books from a variety of sources.
- Set aside a special time to focus on reading with your child.

Remember

- All children are different. One child might not enjoy the same books, or be at the same reading level as another child, or as an older brother or sister did at the same age.
- Many children (and adults) like to return to old favourites from time to time, even when they can read much more difficult stories. This can also happen if the children are unwell or unhappy because familiar loved stories can help them to regain a sense of security and well being.
- Beginners need books with simple words for success and enjoyment. Books that are too hard can put them off.

Using the library

Libraries are a treasure chest for young readers with audiobooks, CDs, DVDs and magazines as well as books.

They also have free internet access and special storytelling sessions for children.

Find your local library at

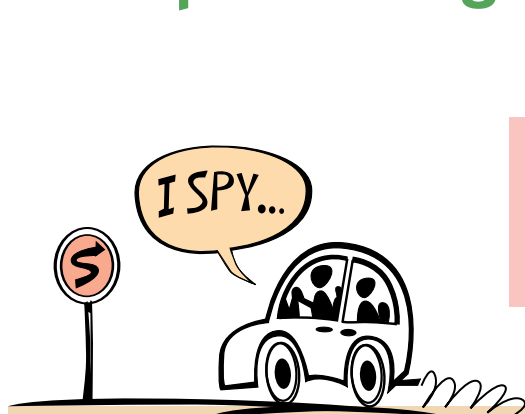
<http://www.brisbane.qld.gov.au/facilities-recreation/libraries/index.htm>

Visiting the library is a great way to:

- encourage your child's reading and show them you value books and reading
- show your child all the different things to read
- involve the whole family in a regular activity
- look for their favourite authors and illustrators
- use resources that might not be available at home
- join in library holiday activities.

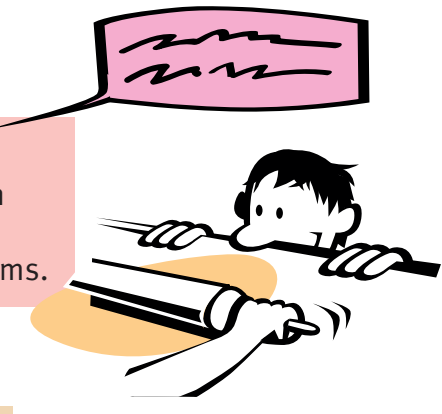


Some everyday activities to help encourage literacy




I SPY...

Think out loud – so your child can learn about how you solve problems.

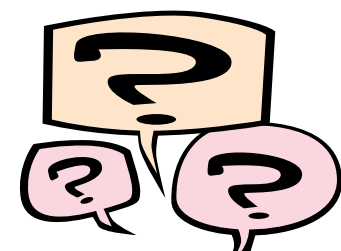


Play word games when out together, such as playing 'I spy' in the car. For young children, you can use colours such as 'I spy something that is red'.


Create a collage with a particular focus using junk mail, old magazines or your child's drawings – this could include pictures of things beginning with an 's' sound or all pictures showing a particular colour.



Dress up – children can practise their language and communication skills by playing 'make believe'.



Ask your child open-ended questions – this encourages them to practise expressing themselves and lets them know you value their thoughts.



Play outdoors – pouring water or sand into containers, scales and measuring containers allows your child to explore literacy and numeracy concepts.

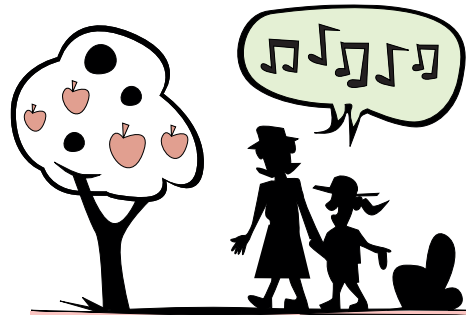


Have your child **collect and sort** the mail – who are the letters for and who are they from?

More everyday activities to help encourage literacy



Make the **writing of letters, notes, cards or emails** a daily family activity – you can write notes to your child and encourage them to write notes back to you.



Sing songs or nursery rhymes while taking a walk, packing away toys or in the car.



Paint and draw – art allows children to express themselves. As your child learns more words you may notice their paintings or drawings become more detailed.

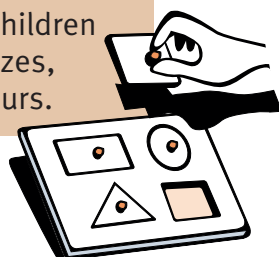


Play word games and do crosswords to help develop spelling and vocabulary.

Play with blocks – concepts of size, numbers, patterns and problem-solving can be explored by playing with blocks. You can help extend your child's mathematical and spatial concepts by giving them paper, pencil and a ruler for drawing their block buildings.



Do a puzzle – puzzles are a great way for children to learn about sizes, shapes and colours.



Make your kitchen a 'cooking' zone and a 'reading' zone – use fridge magnets to make new words and short sentences, have your child write the weekly shopping list and read names on packages.

