



Books Open Doors, Reading Opens Minds



Supporting reluctant readers

Practical tips for parents of primary-aged children

④ Boosting confidence, engagement and motivation



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1.

Making reading fun and engaging



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Reading doesn't have to feel like a chore. In fact, it can easily become one of the most enjoyable parts of your child's day. The key is to keep it interactive, playful and varied so that reading feels more like an adventure than a task.



By mixing methods, you keep reading fresh and enjoyable. Most importantly, you help your child to see that reading is something to look forward to and can be experienced in a variety of different and fun ways.



When reading is playful and exciting, children learn to fall in love with stories.

2. Building confidence by reading together



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Shared reading is a simple way to build confidence. This can take many different forms.

Buddy reading involves taking turns with a book, you may read a page each or perhaps even just a sentence each if your child is very reluctant.

Echo reading involves the adult reading a sentence, then your child repeating it back to them. This is a particularly helpful strategy if your child gets nervous about making mistakes. They can listen to you, while reading along, and practice mirroring it back. This will gradually build their confidence until they feel able to read it without having to echo back to you.

Encouraging older children to read aloud with younger siblings benefits both. The older child practices expression and intonation while ensuring the younger one reads accurately, which can deepen their own understanding. Children often enjoy learning from each other, so if you have more than one child, this is a valuable tip to keep in mind.

Repeated reading is incredibly valuable. Often, parents believe that once a child has read a book, they should always choose a different text. This is not the case! There is so much benefit for children to reread the same text multiple times (especially in the younger years). It can help to improve accuracy, speed, expression and comprehension.

All of these strategies can be used to build your child's confidence, until they feel more able to read independently.



3. Making reading fun and engaging



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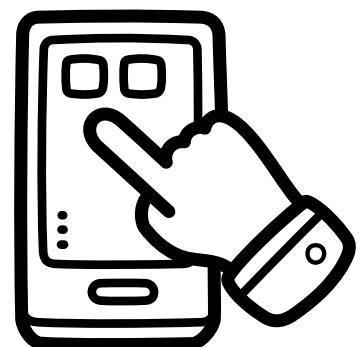
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Make reading into a game whenever you can. Create word scavenger hunts around the house, act out favourite scenes together or encourage your child to draw comics that retell a story they've read. You can also set up a 'reading bingo' challenge with boxes to tick off, such as 'read under a blanket' or 'read to a pet'. These activities give children a sense of fun and achievement.



Don't forget about audiobooks. Listening while following along in a print book is a fantastic way to build fluency. Audiobooks are also especially useful on busy days or when children are tired. It still counts as reading practice and it might just help to get them hooked into a new series, or help them to find a new author they love, which will definitely ease their reluctance moving forward.

Finally, there are many excellent reading apps that make stories interactive and exciting. Just remember to balance screen time with traditional reading as much as possible so that children can experience both.



Check out the 'Reading Bingo' example at the back of this guide for tips on how to turn reading into a fun challenge!



4.

Building confidence through praise



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Confidence grows when reading feels achievable and rewarding. Start with small daily goals. Just 5-10 minutes is enough to build momentum without feeling overwhelming.

The way you respond makes a BIG difference. Offer praise that focuses on effort, not perfection. Below are some examples of how to adapt your feedback in a way that will build your child's confidence.



Instead of....	Try saying...
"You keep reading that word wrong, it's -----"	"I love how you kept trying with that tricky word! Would you like me to help you with it?"
"Why aren't you using voices for the characters?"	"I love it when you try and read with expression. It makes the story so fun to listen to!"
"It sounds like that word, but it is actually -----"	"Great job noticing that word looked like one you already know. Would you like me to help you with it?"



"After nourishment, shelter and companionship, stories are the thing we need most in the world."

-Philip Pullman

5.

Motivation methods



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Celebrating progress along the way (sticker charts, homemade bookmarks or simple family rewards like choosing a movie or game) also help children to see that their effort matters and is being recognised. But remember - it is the effort that is important, not whether or not they are reading any more fluently or accurately than they were before. This will come naturally in time as their effort increases.

READING REWARD CHART							
							★ REWARD
							★ REWARD
							★ REWARD
							★ REWARD
NAME:				YOUR PRIZE:			

Equally as important is choice. Let your child select books that genuinely interest them, even if they seem too easy or not the sorts of books you would choose. Enjoyment leads to motivation, and once motivation has risen, then you can tackle introducing more challenging texts.

Small rewards or incentives can kickstart a love of reading and begin to help motivate a reluctant reader. This will lead to independent enjoyment over time.



6. Keep reading pressure-free



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When reading aloud, remember to keep it pressure-free.

Remind your child that making mistakes is a natural part of learning. While this is an important lesson, many children find it difficult to accept. If your child hesitates to read because they're worried about errors, gently reinforce each day that mistakes are how we learn.

Encourage them to give tricky words a try. This helps them to build resilience and comfort, turning reading into a safe space rather than a test-like environment.

You could start every reading session with a gentle reminder about how we all learn from our mistakes, so not to worry if they read a word incorrectly. Remind them that you are there to support and cheer them on until they succeed!

Remember

- Keep reading pressure-free
- Mistakes are part of learning
- Focus on effort



With steady encouragement, small wins and freedom of choice, your child will begin to see themselves as a capable and confident reader in no time!

7.

Game idea: Reading Bingo



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READING BINGO



Try to cross off as many of the Reading Bingo challenge squares as you can. To succeed, you'll need to read a variety of different types of books!

Read a book that made me laugh	Learnt 5 new facts from the same book	Read a rhyming book or poem
Retold the story of a fiction book to a family member	FREE SPACE!	Read a book that was recommended by a friend
Read a book linked to a topic we are learning about at school	Read 2 books in the same series	Read a book that became a movie (...and watched it too!)

"Books are like flying carpets. They carry you into worlds you have never seen before."



-Cornelia Funke

8.

Confidence boosting praise cards



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"I love how hard you're trying - look at what you just read! Keep going. Your effort is paying off."

"Fantastic effort! You read that clearly and read a tricky word you didn't know last week. What great progress!"

"It's really brave to try tricky words or new parts of the story. Don't worry that you found it hard today. Mistakes are how we learn!"

"Great thinking! You understood that part and can explain it so well. I can tell you are thinking really carefully about the story as you read."

"I can see you are trying really hard to concentrate and pay attention. Well done!"

"Although it was still tricky, you didn't give up, and you kept going. Reading is getting easier every time!"

"You're making me want to go and get my book out to read! It's fun to see you enjoying reading. Keep it up!"

"Even though you didn't feel like reading today, you gave it a go and you tried, and that's fantastic!"



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