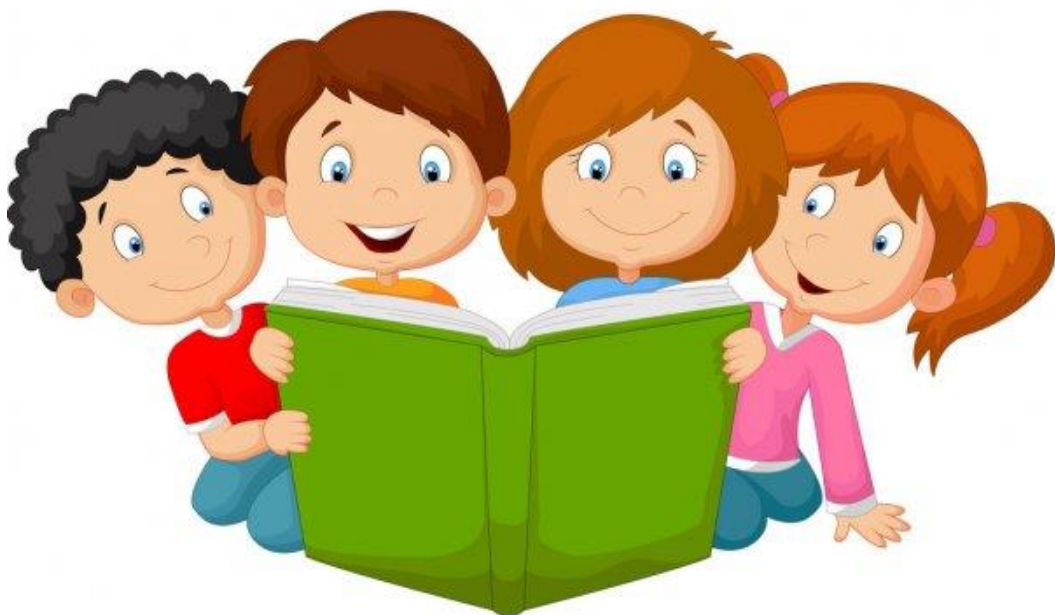




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What Comes Before Reading?

Information and tips to support you and your child at home.



Before Your Child Begins to Read

Before children begin to read, it is important that they develop key listening skills and an ability to discriminate between different sounds. These skills are taught throughout the first term of Reception, and longer if needed, alongside our Phonics scheme. Children will play lots of listening games, be encouraged to listen to a wide variety of sounds in the environment and also explore making their own sounds in different ways. As children begin to train their ears and listening skills, they will find it easier to hear the difference between difference speech and letter sounds. This will support them in hearing initial, medial and final sounds in words. Being able to hear these sounds is key to being a successful reader.

Oral Blending and Segmenting

Well-developed listening skills support children to orally *segment* and *blend* sounds in words, experiment with making sounds and their ability to distinguish between different sounds. If a child cannot hear the sounds in a word said out loud to them, they will find it very difficult to blend sounds when they attempt to read words themselves.

Segment is when you split a word up into its sounds (phonemes), you are 'sounding it out' e.g...

sat = s-a-t man = m-a-n goat = g-oa-t
tap = t-a-p

Blend is when you say the sounds (phonemes) together to make a word, you are pushing the sounds together. e.g. d-o-g (segment) = dog (blend).

d-o-g = dog b-a-g= bag r-e-d= red
c-ar= car

You may hear your child talking about Fred the frog. Every classroom has a Fred and he can only talk in sounds. Fred supports the children in understanding oral blending and segmenting and he will be a key part of phonics sessions. We refer to this to the children as 'Fred Talk'.

A Love of Books and Reading

Another aspect that is important is encouraging a child's *interest* in books and reading! Experience shows that children benefit hugely from exposure to books from an early age.

"Right from the start, lots of opportunities should be provided for children to engage with books that fire their imagination and interest. They should be encouraged to choose and peruse books freely as well as sharing them when read by an adult. Enjoying and sharing books leads to children seeing them as a source of pleasure and interest and motivates them to value reading." - Letters and Sounds Phase 1 Information Booklet.

There are a large number of excellent children's books, some we would recommend are listed below:

- Peace at Last - Jill Murphy
- Owl Babies - Martin Waddell
- Guess How Much I Love You - Sam McBratney
- The Tiger Who Came to Tea - Judith Kerr
- Each Peach Pear Plum - Janet and Allan Ahlberg
- The Very Hungry Caterpillar - Eric Carle
- Ten Little Fingers and Ten Little Toes - Mem Fox
- Dear Zoo - Rod Campbell
- We're Going on a Bear Hunt - Michael Rosen
- Not Now Bernard - David McKee
- Where the Wild Things Are - Maurice Sendak
- The Jolly Postman and Other Peoples Letters - Janet and Allan Ahlberg



Activity Ideas to Support Reading Development at Home

Here are some great ideas that you, as a parent, could use at home to help support your child's phonics journey at school... and so help them read!

1. **Go on a listening walk**
Sit in the garden, the park, the beach, on a bench and just listen. What can they hear? Can they distinguish between the different sounds they hear in different places. E.g. cars in the street and birds in the park.
2. **Have a drumming session!**
Take a spoon or any beater and go outside. Can you gather items together and listen to all of the different sounds you can make when you drum. Experiment with different drumming beats etc.
3. **Make a shaker using different types of containers.** Fill them with different bits and bobs from around the house e.g. rice, seeds, Lego. Listen to the different shakers and talk about the different sounds they make.



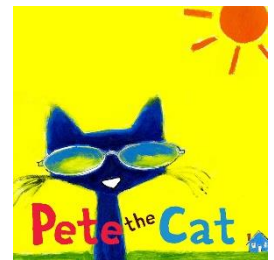
4. Make sets of shakers where two have the same items inside. Cover the bottles or use coloured bottles. Can you decide which two go together just by listening?



5. Talk as a family about your favourite sounds. Can you copy each other's sounds? Some of the teachers' favourite sounds are the sound of waves crashing on the beach and the sound of a baby laughing.

6. Story time!

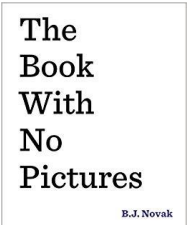
Read a familiar story book and change voices for the different characters. Use loud voices and quiet voices. Some nice books for character voices are 'Pete the Cat' by Eric Litwin and 'We're going on a Bear Hunt' by Michael Rosen.



7. Learn and sing familiar songs and nursery rhymes. There are many on YouTube that you could sing along to. Some favourites are 'This old man', 'Old MacDonald', 'Twinkle Twinkle' and 'Incy Wincy Spider'

8. Play 'adjust the volume'

Make different sounds with just your voice. e.g. ooooooooooooooooooooooooooooo, ooooooooooooooooooooo. Adjust each other's voice to loud and quiet (pretend you have a volume button or a remote control). Even try a squeaky voice and use different sounds like 'wheeeeeee', 'boooooing', 'oooooh', 'sssss', 'shshshshsh', 'mmmmoooo', 'chchchch', 'zzzzzzz' and 'ticktock'. A really fun story with loads of different sounds is 'The Book with no pictures' by B.J.Novak.



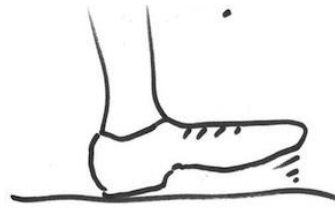
9. Play 'Hide and Seek' but follow your voice as you answer, or hide with a musical instrument. The seeker needs to follow the sound of the musical instrument to find you.

10. Peek a boo instrument.

Gather some instruments (or make them). Play the different sounds until you and your child become familiar with them. Then take turns closing your eyes, then guess which instrument the other person is playing.

11. Make different sounds with your body (body percussion). Demonstrate using the body to make different sounds by clapping your hands, stomping your feet, clicking your fingers etc.

12. Play body percussion echo games. You make a series of sounds using your body and your child has to do the same sequences. Start with a short series of claps, or a series of stomps in different rhythm patterns and see if they can copy it.



13. Find your favourite rhyming story or poem, and emphasise the rhyming words as you say it. Play around with changing them, if you can.

14. Make a large bowl of rhyming soup.

Can you find items around the house that rhyme? Put them into an empty bowl and make 'soup'. It can be anything. e.g. I am mixing a key, some tea and a pea into the bowl. Try adding an item that does not rhyme. Can you find the odd one out?

15. Play 'I spy' but use the SOUND the letter makes instead of the letter NAME. e.g. "I spy something that begins with the sound a a"



16. Play a game where everyone has to say a word that starts with the same sound e.g. ball, bat, basket, banana, baby. You could play this game while driving around with the family in the car.

17. Word chains

Say a word and then the next person has to say a word that starts with the last sound of your word. e.g. cat - tap - pet - train - nets - spider - red etc. Use the last SOUND and not the last letter in the spelling of the word. i.e. 'spade' would end in the 'd' sound.

18. Mirror Mouth

Stand in front of a mirror and study the way your mouth moves when you make different sounds. Mmmm, sssss, t t t, zzzz, b b b.



19. Robot voice

Gather some items together. Can you pretend to be a robot and 'sound them out'? E.g. place a clothes peg on the table and in a robot voice sound out 'p-e-g'. You could even dress up in a robot mask (that you could make out of card and tinfoil) and really have fun with this game. Suggested items would be: peg, hat, cup, cat, pen, pan, lid, jug, jam, bug, man.

20. Use your phone to record different family members saying things. Can your child listen and figure out who it is?

21. Glass bottle flutes

Fill glass bottles with water in different amounts and 'play' them like an instrument by blowing across the top, or tapping them with a spoon. Listen to the different sounds they each make.



22. Spot the intro

Play some of your child's favourite songs, but just the first few seconds. Can they guess what it is? You could even record TV themes or rhymes.

23. Fill in the blanks

Sing one of your child's favourite songs, or tell a familiar story or rhyme, but leave some words out. Can your child fill in the missing words?

24. Read a rhyming story that is familiar to your child. Leave out the rhyming word. Can your child predict what the word should be, or fill in a word that matches the rhyme? Julia Donaldson books are great for this kind of activity.



25. Build a den or a fort together and use it as a story-telling cave. Make up stories about absolutely anything! You could gather some fun family photos and make up stories about fantastic journeys or have your child tell you about what they think happened in the photo.

26. Play Simon says using sound talk e.g. 'Simon says put your hands on your... l-e-g... h-ea-d... b-a-ck... l-i-p.

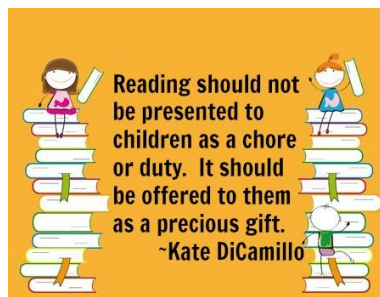
27. Play I-Spy with objects. Lay a range out on the table e.g. tin, jug, box, sock, sheep, car, pan and pen. Get your child to guess by saying, 'I spy with my little eye something with the sounds... s-o-ck.' Can your child be in charge and sound out the words for you to guess?

You may wonder what these games have to do with reading? Well, these activities and games all develop listening skills and also help prepare your child to discriminate between sounds, recognise rhyming and to make a variety of different sounds using a variety of different objects, as well as many other skills needed to be able to decode words and blend and segment. The skills they learn in these listening activities and games help them make sense of the phonics they will continue learning throughout their school career.

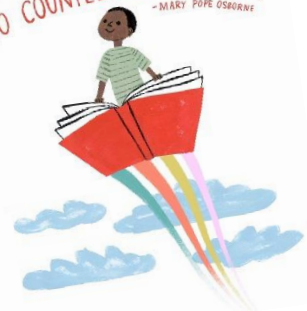
When reading is fun, it is more appealing.

You can find magic
wherever you look. Sit
back and relax, all you
need is a book.

- Dr. Seuss



"READING IS A PASSPORT
TO COUNTLESS ADVENTURES."
-MARY POPE OSBORNE



Thank you for your support in your child's reading journey.

If you ever have any questions at all about supporting your child's reading skills, please don't hesitate to talk to your child's class teacher.



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