



# Build your child's reading skills

For parents of primary students

## Learning to read is a process

When a child learns to walk, he goes through certain stages from crawling to standing and, finally, to his first step. Learning to read is a similar process – learning is done through stages.

Every child is unique. Some move steadily from stage to stage while others take more time to move to the next stage. This is true whether a child is learning to walk or to read.

## You can make a difference

Just as you helped your child to talk and walk, there are ways you can help your child read. To help your child move smoothly through the stages, the key is to give her the right kind of support at the right time.

*"The task of learning to read is the greatest single effort that the human mind can undertake. Your child cannot do it alone. To become a real reader your child needs you." Paul Kropp*

## Ideas to Get You Started

Just like a house requires a solid foundation, there are certain things your child needs to be able to do in order to learn how to read. These include:

- learning the letters of the alphabet
- learning sounds letters make
- learning how books "work" – for example, books are read from left to right, front to back

## Try sounding out words

Sounding out words is difficult for beginning readers. Try these tips:

- Skip the word and finish the sentence. The meaning may become clearer.
- Ask "What word would make sense here?" Use your **head** and **eyes** to read.
- Look for a small word you know inside of a longer word, e.g. **inside**
- Use another word that makes sense

## Focus on the positive

*"Beginners must see themselves as successful before they are capable. Confidence building is the key to reading success." Vera Goodman, Reading is More Than Phonics!*

Try saying...

- "I like the way you stopped reading when the sentence didn't make sense"
- "I like the book you brought home for us to share"
- "Good reading! That's exactly what you should do"

## Reading is more than just sounding out words

*"Efficient readers use strategies that go beyond phonics." Vera Goodman*

Comprehension involves making connections between print and the reader's experiences. Good readers use a variety of strategies to make meaning from print.

## Give the right help at the right time

### If you notice that your child...

- shows an interest in books and the print around them
- imitates you as you read

- retells stories she has heard
- memorizes favourite stories
- begins pointing to words
- reads common words (e.g. in a book, on a sign)
- sounds out words she doesn't know
- points to the words being read

**...you should:**

- read to your child as often as you can
- accept and praise your child's attempts to read
- talk about the books you read
- talk about the pictures
- have your child join in with familiar stories
- set up a home message board for your child to read and write notes
- try strategies other than sounding out
- give your child time to correct errors. If it makes sense, ignore it, for example if your child says "house" instead of "home," that's okay.

**Questions to ask your child during reading time:**

- Did the story remind you of anything you know about?
- What did you wonder about while you were reading?
- What do you think might happen next?
- What do you see in your head as you read this?
- What do you understand now that you didn't understand before?

*Workshop presented by Cathy Harris and Catherine Rutter, Teachers. Tip sheet originally prepared by Linda Coombes and Karen Fox, Teachers.*