

# Helping your child with Literacy and Homework

## Getting Started

Tus maith – Leath na hOibre! A good start is half the work.

### The Place:

In order to get started, give some thought to finding a place where you and your child will be comfortable and warm. A space offering good lighting and ventilation is essential. This could be a quiet spot in the living room or even the child's bedroom. A noise free zone is a must and that means no distractions from background tv or radio!

### The Time:

Finding the time may be difficult but the effort is so worthwhile both for you and your child. Decide to make the commitment and STICK to it. Three sessions a week is ideal but if you cannot do three then try two a week. Each session should last no longer than 30 minutes unless the child is enjoying the learning experience and is eager to continue. If the child is struggling don't persevere, stop immediately. Start the session early, never close to bedtime.

### Timetabling:

Drawing up a timetable is very important. Each session during the selected days should have a different focus. Try to strike a balance between literacy and numeracy. For example, if your chosen days are Monday, Wednesday and Friday, why not have some spelling on the first day, a maths session on Wednesday and perhaps grammar or comprehension on Friday. Rotate if necessary.

### Session Format:

A session should be a cooperative process between you and your child, delivered in a calm and positive way. After the first session every other should start by recapping what was learnt in the previous one. If a topic is found to be extra difficult allow extra recap time at the start of the next session for reinforcement. Reinforcement consolidates learning.

### Book-keeping:

Keep a notebook and record what has been done, what needs to be revised, difficult areas that need extra attention, etc and any technique you used that was successful. Take note of corrections that teachers have made in his/her copies too and use these for recapping and checking progress.

### Testing methods:

When correcting exercises give positive encouragement, vary your method of asking questions, quizzes, matching games etc can be just as beneficial as traditional methods. The same mundane approach can stunt progress so don't be afraid to experiment on the many ways your child can have positive learning experiences.

### Reward all efforts!

When doing an exercise, frame it within a particular time, also allow the child to compete against themselves using a previous similar exercise as a benchmark. This is good technique especially for exam preparation.

### Working together as a team:

We are all familiar of how successful teamwork can be and it is a useful approach to use when assisting your child. A 'lets do this together' attitude gives the child positive support and therefore s/he is less likely to feel like an isolated learner.

### What if.....

Parents are sometimes reluctant to offer help, afraid of being asked a question that they may not know the answer. Please don't let this deter you. Always tell the truth and say. 'I don't know but I can find out'.

## Reading:

Reading is highly complex activity incorporating a number of skills, competencies and interactions between them. Competence in reading is affected by interest and motivation regardless of skill level.

Reading can often be mistaken for 'Print Awareness'. The latter may not make the vital connection between reading the print and its actual meaning. Often the decoding of the print to extract meaning and understanding can be a problem particularly for the weaker child. These children rely heavily on context, previous knowledge and prompts like pictures and illustrations.

Research has shown that early association with books and other reading matter is a great advantage to a child and the earlier this happens the better.

Try Paired Reading with your child. There is a Paired Reading set of instructions here.

## Paired Reading Instruction

### Introduction

Being able to read fluently, being able to understand what we read and make few mistakes is required for successful learning and in everyday life.

Like all skills, reading can be improved with practice.

Paired Reading is not meant to take the place of school teaching. Rather it provides a framework for the extra practice which thorough learning requires. Reading should be fun and we hope that you and your child enjoy taking part.

You can use one of two techniques (or a mixture of the two) when reading with your child:

1. Reading along with your child
2. Listening and correcting any mistakes.

Whichever technique you use, the following recommendations are the same.

#### Stick to a regular routine

Choose an appropriate book.

#### Suitable Place

Try to find a place that is comfortable. If you are not comfortable you will not be able to concentrate. Consequently, you will not be able to look carefully and easily at the book together. You will need to sit side by side so you can look at the book together.

#### Always show your interest

Knowing that you are interested will make your child try his/her hardest. Receiving your undivided attention is very rewarding for them.

#### You can make a significant difference.

Talk!

Helpers should show interest in the book the reader has chosen. Talk about the pictures . Talk about what is in the book as you go through it. It is best if you talk at the end of a page or section or you might lose track of the story or text.

Ask what might happen next. Do not do all the talking, let the child share his/her views.

#### Ask questions and get involved

Reading well involves understanding as well as fluency. To see if what's just been read has been 'taken in', ask a few questions at the end. Again, praise correct answers, but don't let them feel too disappointed when they're wrong.

## Paired Reading Method

Reading along with your child:

The parent and the child both read the words out loud together. Neither must go too fast. Parents should make their speed as fast or as slow as the child's. The child must read every word. If the reader struggles and then gets it right, the parent should show approval. Do not let the child struggle for more than five seconds.

If the child struggles too long or struggles and gets it wrong then the parent just says the word. The parent now makes sure the child says it right as well. (Make sure the child looks at the word when doing this). It can help if one of you points to the word you are both reading with a finger or a pen. It is best if the parent does the pointing and goes at the child's pace.

Read as fast or as slowly as they do but avoid the temptation to take over the lead yourself! If you can, adjust the pace of your reading to be always a fraction of a second behind your child's voice.

Look at the example below:

Child: 'The blue train stood behind the e.....ngine.'

Parent: "The blue train stood behind the engine"

This may take practice, but it will help you to read at the child's pace. Be patient with your child. Don't tell him/her off for making a mistake, just keep on reading and encourage him/her to join in. As your child gets more confident lower your voice then drop out altogether, but come back in if he/she makes a mistake.

## Reading Alone

After a while your child may want to read to you. When this happens, you should still sit closely together and follow each word on the page.

### Try to follow this procedure!

Ask your child to make a small “sign” - perhaps by knocking on a table or tapping the book - whenever he or she wants to read aloud alone. You should still follow the words on the page. When your child wants you to join in again, he or she makes the same "sign" and you carry on reading again.

If the child struggles for more than five seconds or struggles and gets it wrong, the parent reads the correct word aloud for them. Make sure the child then repeats it correctly as well. You both go on reading out loud together until the child then feels confident enough to read alone and asks the parent to be quiet.

### New ways of helping

It is often harder for older people to learn new ways than it is for younger people! With paired reading the hardest things to get used to are:

When the child gets a word wrong, the parent just tells the reader what the word says. Then the child says it right. Do not make the child struggle or “break it up” or “sound it out”.

When the child gets words right, the parent should smile and say “good!” Do not nag and fuss about the words the child gets wrong.

Always praise:

- good reading of hard words
- getting all the words in a sentence correct
- putting wrong words right before the parent does (self-correction).

### Listening and not reading at the same time

Give help when necessary.

Help is needed when a child is struggling with a word /says a word incorrectly/ misses or skips a word / puts in a word that is not printed. If your child cannot say a word, help him/her by giving the first part, and if that fails then give him/her the whole word. Ask him/her to repeat it before going on.

The same applies to a word which is said wrongly or is skipped or missed. If an extra word is put in, point this out.

Don't be a harsh critic. When you need to give help, do so in a friendly way so that the pleasure of reading is not lost. Don't go over and over a mistake.

From time to time read part of the book to the child. This will encourage more expressive reading and will help the reader get through more of the material.

### Notes

It is a help for everyone to keep a note each day of what has been read and how you are progressing. Therefore, do keep the record very carefully - it also serves to show your child how seriously you are taking the activity. Try very hard never to miss a session.

# Reading Record Form

For Week Beginning Monday\_\_\_\_\_

Day/ Date	Book/Page	Number of pages read	Todays reflection



## PAIRED READING: REVIEW STEPS

### At the first Reading Session

1. Parent and child agree on reading times
2. They also agree on a starting signal
3. Parent reviews how technique works

### Before Reading

4. Child chooses reading materials and can change them at any time.
5. Find a quiet spot away from distractions.

### Reading in Pairs

6. Always begin by reading together
7. If an important error is made, the parent says the word and the child repeats it. Note: Small errors that do not affect the meaning are not corrected for emergent readers.

### Reading Solo

8. Parent and child agree on a solo reading signal..
9. Parent praises the child when solo is attempted.
- 10 Parent continues to offer support and praise during solo Reading.

### Return to Duet Reading

11. Parent corrects child's mistake (gives word - child repeats it). Return to duet reading until the student signals to go solo again.

### "Talk and discuss"

12. Remember to relax and talk about what you have read!



Give your child the gift of reading – the sky's the limit!



Enjoy the reading yourself and remember to take some time out of your own busy schedule for a good read. GOOD LUCK!

### Spelling:

Get a good spelling list book. There are many good ones available in local book suppliers. Buy a small note book for the child to record spelling tests during sessions. Teach the 'Look Say Cover Write Check' learning strategy for spelling, its tried, tested and works. Use the glossaries at the back of your child's text books for spelling lists. After all, they need to know these words if they are to understand the subject.

Here are some useful strategies from the net.

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# Effective Spelling Strategies

There are four categories of spelling strategies: phonetic, rule -based, visual and morphemic. A successful and effective spelling programme uses all four strategies while helping your student become a better speller.

## 1. Phonetic Spelling Strategies

When a student listens for each sound in a word and then attempts to represent those sounds with a letter or letter combination, he's using a phonetic spelling strategy. You teach this spelling strategy by teaching the basic phonograms alongside the basic spelling rules.

## 2. Rule-Based Spelling Strategies

It isn't efficient or effective to spell with phonograms only. The second type of spelling strategy includes recognizing the rules and generalizations of the language. For example, if the student knows that the "ch" sound is spelled "tch" when it follows a short vowel, the student has a better chance of spelling the word "kitchen" correctly.

## 3. Visual Spelling Strategies

Word banks that focus on a single concept, such as the "j" sound spelled as "dge," help the student remember words related to that concept. Visual memory strategies also come into play when dealing with homophones. Extensive reading and word games are two of the best ways to help a student develop visual spelling strategies.

## 4. Morphemic Spelling Strategies

Morphemic strategies are based on the knowledge of how the meaning of a word influences its spelling. A spelling program that teaches morphemic spelling strategies may teach Greek and Latin roots, how to add prefixes and suffixes to base words, and how to form compound words and abbreviations.





