

PAIRED READING - HOW TO DO IT: A GUIDE FOR PARENTS

PAIRED READING is a very good way for parents to help with their children's reading. It works well with most children and their reading gets a lot better. Also, Paired Reading fits in very well with the teaching at school, so children don't get mixed up. Most children really like it - it helps them want to read.

WHAT YOU NEED

Books to choose from at home, from school or the library. The child can also choose newspapers, magazines, or other items they want to read.

Your child should choose the book. Children learn to read better from books they like. Don't worry if it seems too hard. In Paired Reading you help the child through the hard bits. Your child will soon get used to picking books that aren't too hard.

If your child gets fed up with a book, and wants to change it, that's O.K. If the book is boring, it must be their own fault, of course! Perhaps they should choose more carefully next time.

TIME

Try very hard to do some Paired Reading nearly every day, even if only for 5 minutes. Aim for 5 days per week. Don't do more than 15 minutes unless your child wants to carry on. Don't make children do Paired Reading when they really want to do something else.

If parents haven't got time to do Paired Reading 5 days a week, grandmother or grandfather or older brother or sister or even friends and neighbours can help. They must all do Paired Reading in just the same way, though, or the child will get mixed up.

PLACE

Try to find a place that's quiet. Children can't read when it's noisy, or when there's lots going on. Get away from the TV, or turn it off.

Try to find a place that's comfy. If you're not comfortable, you'll both be shifting about. Then you won't be able to look at the book carefully together.

Get close - reading together can be very warm and snuggly. You both need to be able to see the book easily - or one of you will get neck-ache!

NEW WAYS OF HELPING

It's often harder for parents to learn new ways than it is for children! With Paired Reading, the hardest things for parents to get used to are:-

1. When your child gets a word wrong, you just tell your child what that word says. You say the word right, then your child says it after you. You DON'T make the child struggle and struggle, or 'break it up' or 'sound it out.' Don't worry if you come to a word neither of you are sure about - just look it up or ask someone.
2. BUT don't jump in and put the word right straight away. Give the child 4 or 5 seconds to see if they will put it right themselves. However, if your child zooms straight past a mistake without noticing it, you may have to point out the mistake a bit quicker.
3. When your child reads well, smile and show you are pleased and say "good". DON'T nag and fuss about the words your child gets wrong. Praise for: good reading of hard words, getting all the words in a sentence right and putting wrong words right before you do (self correction).
4. Parents often ask "should we point at words?" The answer is "yes" or "no". On a hard book, or when the child is tired or not concentrating well, pointing might help. But only do it when necessary, not all the time. And if the child can do it rather than you, that is better. Sometimes both can point together.

TALK

Show interest in the book your child has chosen. Talk about the pictures. Talk about what's in the book as your child goes through it. Its best if you talk at the end of a page or section, or your child might lose track of the story. Ask what your child thinks might happen next. Listen to your child-don't do all the talking.

Talk is very important - it shows your interest in what the child is reading. It also checks on the child's understanding without seeming like a "test".

NOTES

It is a help for both child and school teacher to keep a note of what has been read each day and how the child is going on.

Keep a Paired Reading Diary (on a card or sheet of paper or diary provided by school). Note down the date, what was read, for how long, who helped and any comments about how well the child did.

This can be taken into school each week by the child to show the teacher - who will give more praise and write their own comment.

HOW TO DO IT

Reading Together

To start with, especially when reading something which is hard for your child, you and your child both read the words out loud together. You must not go too fast. Make your speed the same as your child's. This helps the child through the hard bits and gives a good example of how to read well.

Your child must read every word. If your child struggles and then gets it right, show you are pleased. But if your child hasn't said the word right in 4-5 seconds, just say it right yourself again, then let the child say it right as well, then carry on. If your child rushes past mistakes, you might have to put them right a bit quicker.

Make sure your child looks at the words. Especially on hard reading, it can help if one of you points to the word you are both reading with a finger. It's best if your child will do the pointing.

Reading Alone

When you are Reading Together and your child feels good enough, he or she might want to read a bit alone. You should agree on a way for your child to signal for you to stop Reading Together.

This could be a knock, a sign or a squeeze. Some children like to nudge you. The signal must be clear, easy to do and agreed between you before you start. (You don't want your child to have to say "be quiet", or they will lose track of the reading).

When the child signals, you stop reading out loud straight away, and praise the child for being confident.

When Reading Alone, sooner or later your child will struggle for more than 5 second, or struggle and get it wrong. Then you read the word out loud right for your child and make sure your child says it right as well.

Then you both go on reading out loud Together again, to get back into a flow. Soon your child will again feel good enough to read alone and signal you to be quiet. You will go on like this, switching from Reading Together to Reading Alone to give the child just as much help as they need. You will Read Together more on hard books, less on easy books.

Try to make sure you stick to these "Rules", at least for the first few weeks. If you don't you may get in a muddle. Make sure you don't do each other's "job". The child signals to shut you up - don't decide to go quiet when you feel like it. Also, when the child makes a mistake Reading Alone, you must correct it and go back to Reading Together. The child might ask for you only to give them the word they got stuck on - but that's not what the Rules say!