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Reading with Young Children

Written by
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20 years of
teaching children
to read



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Reading Guide for Parents

FRANCES WONG



FRANCES WONG, AUTHOR

Why is it important to read with your child daily?

Studies show that children who read at home with an adult have higher attainment in school, more empathy and greater comprehension than their peers who do not.

Reading at home with children, either to your child or encouraging your child to read is the biggest indicator of academic success.

But why is this?

Reading benefits children in a number of different ways, some we don't expect.

Brain development

Reading stimulates the brain, which helps children develop critical thinking, problem-solving, and analytical skills.

Vocabulary

Reading exposes children to new words and ways of putting words together, which helps them expand their vocabulary.

Background knowledge

Reading helps children build a wide base of general knowledge, which helps them understand new topics at school.

Focus

Reading helps children learn to focus on one task at a time.

Memory

Reading improves memory retention as children remember characters, relationships, and settings.

Cognitive ability

Reading keeps the mind engaged and improves cognitive ability.

School readiness

Children who start reading early and continue throughout childhood have better school readiness.

Academic success

Reading for pleasure is more likely to determine whether a child does well at school than their social or economic background.

In this guide
you can expect:

20 years of
teaching
experience

Phonics

Phonics resources
recommendations

Comprehension
explained

Comprehension
questions

Useful resources

STEPS TO

READ



1^o STEP

Explore board books and picture books with your baby or toddler.

Engage them by discussing the pictures, listening to rhymes, and encouraging them to turn the pages.



2^o STEP

Practice phonics with your child by focusing on pure sounds and building words using those sounds. Additionally, introduce sight reading for words that are not easily decodable.

3^o STEP

This is where the fun begins! Encourage your child to answer questions about what they're reading.

Discuss the book together and ask them to summarize the story in their own words.





Phonics

I don't think it would be possible to have a guide to helping children learn to read without reference to phonics.

There are many divided opinions about phonics and the truth is, phonics doesn't work for every child. However, in my 20 years of teaching experience where I have helped thousands of children learn to read, the majority of children start reading due to phonics.

But why does phonics help children read?



Teaching Phonics

When teaching phonics, it's important for parents to focus on using pure sounds. These are the individual sounds that make up a word. For example, if you say "cat" slowly, you can hear the distinct sounds: cu-ah-tu.

Parents should avoid using letter names when teaching reading. While it's fine to teach that the letter 'A' is called "ay," letter names won't help children blend sounds to form words.

A great resource to help parents learn and teach pure sounds is [Alphablocks](#), which offers excellent support for phonics learning.



Pure Sounds

Imagine you're just starting to read in French, Italian, or any unfamiliar language. You've heard the word "chatte" and know it refers to something that meows, but you've never seen it written before. If you recognize the sounds "ch," "a," and "tte," you'll be able to piece together the word and read it.

This is why we focus on teaching pure letter sounds when learning to read. For example, we tell children that the letter 'A' can be pronounced as "ay" but emphasize the pure sound "ah" when teaching them how to read, along with sounds like "cu."



Key Resources

One of my absolute favourite resources for teaching phonics is [Alphablocks](#). You can watch episodes on the CBeebies iPlayer and YouTube.

But there's more! Alphablocks also has books and magazines available for children, which you can find on [Amazon](#) and the [Five Minutes of Fun](#) magazine website.

Another fantastic option is the [Letters and Sounds](#) phonics scheme, which offers a wide range of fun, free resources for both parents and children.

And don't forget to check out [Jolly Phonics](#)! It's another excellent tool for teaching phonics.

Reading Comprehension: Explained



What is reading comprehension?

When your child first begins exploring books, you'll notice that board books are filled with bright colors and interesting images, but have very few words.

This is intentional. These books are designed not to teach reading, but to help children develop language skills.

For example, you might see a picture of a duck and say, "Look, a duck! Can you point to the duck?" This simple interaction is the foundation of reading comprehension, helping your child understand what they see on the page.



Reading comprehension: the next step

Once children have learned to read using phonics, they progress to reading comprehension. This is where a story truly comes to life, allowing children to experience the magic within the text. (In the UK, reading comprehension is also something they'll be tested on until the age of 16!)

Understanding a story is essential for grasping its message, connecting with its characters, and developing empathy and metacognition.

When listening to your child read each day, engage them by asking questions about the book and finding creative ways to explore the story. What motivates the character? What might happen next? What has happened so far? The more discussions you have, the stronger your child's comprehension skills will become.

Board Books or Picture Books

Board books or picture books, the intention is the same: to generate a conversation with you and your child.

Here are some questions you can ask when reading with your toddler:

- Who is this? (Pointing to a character or object in the book)
- What sound does a [animal] make? (e.g., duck, cow, dog)
- Can you show me the [object/animal]? (e.g., "Can you show me the ball?")
- What color is this? (Pointing to a colorful object)
- What is the [character] doing? (e.g., "What is the dog doing?")
- Can you find the [specific object/animal]? (e.g., "Can you find the apple?")
- Is the [animal] big or small?
- Where is [character]? (e.g., "Where is the cat?")
- What does the [object] feel like? (if it's a touch-and-feel book, e.g., "What does the bunny feel like?")
- What happens next? (After turning the page or reaching the end of a story)

Remember, the goal isn't for the child to always get the answer right, but to engage in the question and conversation.

If your child guesses incorrectly about what might happen next or what a character is doing, it opens up an opportunity for discussion and learning.



Encouraging a Love of Reading

Many parents want their children to love reading and find enjoyment in it. Here are my top tips for encouraging a love of reading in your child:

- **Lead by Example:** Let your child see you reading regularly. Share your enthusiasm for books, whether it's a novel, magazine, or even articles online.
- **Visit Libraries and Bookshops:** Regular trips to libraries or bookstores can be exciting. Encourage your child to explore and discover new books, and participate in library events or reading programs.
- **Allow Choice:** Let your child choose what they want to read. Whether it's comics, graphic novels, or non-fiction, allowing them to pick their own books fosters a sense of ownership and excitement about reading.
- **Make Reading a Routine:** Establish a regular reading time each day, whether it's before bedtime or during a quiet afternoon. This helps create a reading habit.



Activities for Toddlers

- **Storytime with Props:** Choose a favorite picture book and gather some simple props related to the story (toys, puppets, or images). Use these props to make the story come alive as you read, encouraging your toddler to participate and act out parts of the story.
- **Interactive Books:** Use board books with flaps, textures, or lift-the-flap features. These interactive elements keep toddlers engaged and curious about what comes next, making reading a hands-on experience.
- **Picture Walk:** Before reading a book, take a "picture walk" by flipping through the pages together and discussing the illustrations.



Activities for Older Children

- **Reading Scavenger Hunt:** Create a scavenger hunt using a specific book or a selection of books. Make a list of items, characters, or themes for your child to find as they read. This encourages them to pay attention to details while enjoying the story.
- **Story Mapping:** After reading a book, have your child create a story map that outlines the main characters, setting, and plot. They can draw pictures and write brief descriptions. This activity helps with comprehension and reinforces understanding of story structure.
- **Book Reviews:** Encourage your child to write or verbally share a short review of a book they've read.

Comprehension for older children

Once older children are reading with fluency, they can move on to understanding the story.

This will help them be more expressive when reading the story aloud, as well.

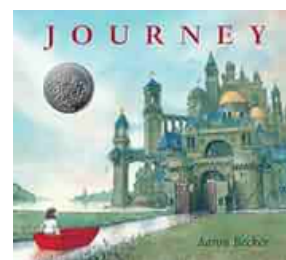
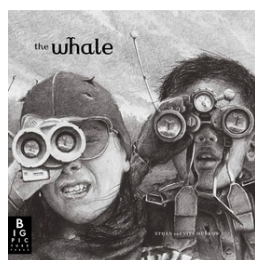
Here are some questions you can ask your child when reading with them.

- Who is the main character in the story, and what do you like about them?
- What is the setting of the story? Where does it take place?
- What problem does the main character face? How do they try to solve it?
- Can you describe a scene that made you feel happy or sad? Why?
- What do you think will happen next in the story? Why do you think that?
- How does the character change from the beginning to the end of the story?
- What is your favorite part of the book, and why do you like it?
- Are there any words or phrases that you found interesting or new? What do they mean?
- If you could ask the author one question about the book, what would it be?
- What lesson or message do you think the story is trying to teach?

The purpose of these questions is to encourage the child to think critically about the story. With practice, they will eventually be able to answer all the questions accurately.

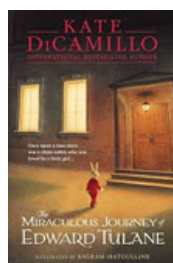
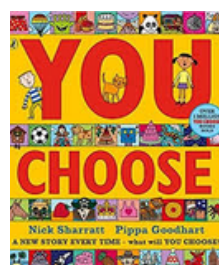
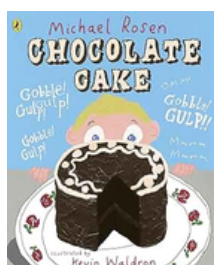


Reading Recommendations: Books that promote reading comprehension



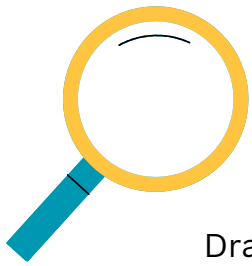
Wordless books are fantastic for generating conversations about the story and deepening children's understanding of wordless communication.

See also, Floatsam by David Wiesner and The Arrival by Shaun Tan.



There are hundreds of incredible children's books that can spark fantastic reading comprehension moments with your little ones. Here are some of my standout favorites.

If you're looking for even more recommendations, I highly suggest checking out the amazing [Claire Linney](#), who reads some truly remarkable books.



MY BOOK REVIEW



Draw and write about one of the books you've read this summer.

Draw the cover of the book.

The name of the book:

.....

The writer of the book:

.....

The characters of the book:

-
-
-
-
-
-
-
-

The plot of the book:

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MY RATING



My Book Review

Book Title

Author :

Name :

Age :

This book was about...

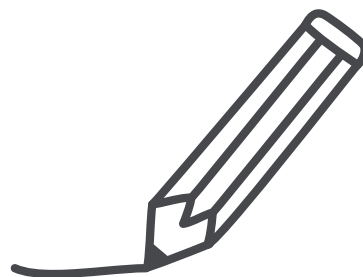
A drawing of my
favorite character

My favorite part was...

I gave this book stars.



Name: _____



My book review

Title

A hand-drawn rectangular box with a 3D effect, created by adding diagonal lines to the bottom and right edges. It is intended for the student to write the title of the book they are reviewing.

Author

A hand-drawn rectangular box with a 3D effect, created by adding diagonal lines to the bottom and right edges. It is intended for the student to write the author's name.

Characters

A hand-drawn rounded rectangular box with a 3D effect, created by adding diagonal lines to the bottom and right edges. Inside the box, there are five horizontal lines for writing the names of the characters from the book.

Three new words I
learned

A hand-drawn rectangular box with a 3D effect, created by adding diagonal lines to the bottom and right edges. Inside the box, there are three horizontal lines for writing the three new words the student learned from the book.

My favourite part was

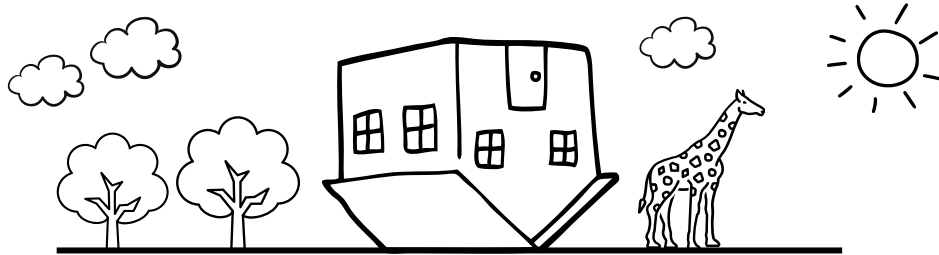
A hand-drawn large rounded rectangular box with a 3D effect, created by adding diagonal lines to the bottom and right edges. It is intended for the student to write their favourite part of the book.

How did you feel about
this book?

A hand-drawn rectangular box with a 3D effect, created by adding diagonal lines to the bottom and right edges. It is intended for the student to write how they felt about the book.

MY CRAZY HOUSE

Read the description about a crazy house and answer the questions



I live in a crazy house with my family. My house is in the forest. It was built upside down. On the first floor there are two bedrooms and there is a bathroom. There is a swimming pool in the bathroom. On the second floor there is a kitchen and a living room. There are sofas in the bedrooms and there are beds in the kitchen. There is a bath in the living room and there is a fridge in the swimming pool. I have a giraffe as a pet. It lives in my garden.

- Why is this a crazy house?

- How many rooms does it have?

- What is there on the first floor?

- What is there on the second floor?

- What can you find in the kitchen?

- What pet does this family have?

Name:

Class:

Farm Animals

Reading Comprehension

Instructions: Read the passage below. Based on the story, answer the questions given.

Horses are farm animals.
They live in a stable.
They are fast and strong.
Horses eat hay and grass.
Humans ride horses.
Horses help people feel better.
Horses like to be petted and groomed.



1 Where do horses live?

2 What do horses like to eat?

3 What are some characteristics of horses?

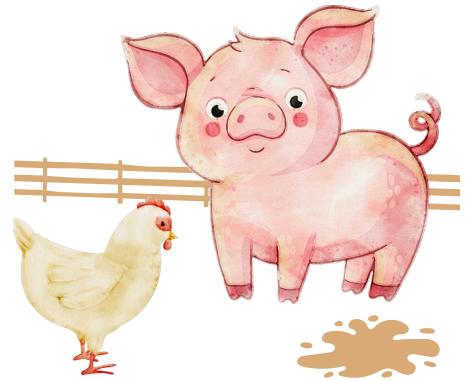
Name: _____

Date: _____

READING COMPREHENSION

Zig the Pig

I have a pig. It is so big.
His name is Zig. Zig is a big pig.
Dad put him in the big pen.
The big pen has also my hen.
Zig stays together with my hen.
Sometimes Zig chases my hen Zen.
"Oh, Zig! Let go of Zen," I said.



Read the words and write it on the blank to complete the sentences based on the story.

hen

pen

Zen

Zig

pig

I have a big _____.

The pig's name is _____.

The pig was put in the big _____.

The pig is with the hen named _____.

Sometimes the pig chase the _____.