

General Description

Experimental readers often 'read' by using pictures or memory of the storyline. They may identify some words in texts, but, they are more focused on getting across the meaning of a text rather than reading every word accurately.

How to Support Experimental Readers

Experimental readers will benefit from a range of experiences. Consider any of the following suggestions.

- Read to your child every day.
- Reading aloud helps children expand their vocabulary, appreciate the value of books and other texts, understand new ideas and concepts, and learn about the world around them.
- Expose your child to a wide variety of texts, e.g. *books, magazines, electronic texts, brochures, newspapers, comics*.
These texts can be read many times so children become familiar with them. Familiarity helps build self-confidence.
- Encourage your child to 'have a go' at reading.
- Encourage and praise your child's attempts to 'read'.
- Ensure your child sees other members of the family reading and talking about their reading. This helps Experimental readers understand that there are different purposes for reading.
- Talk about the characters, people and events in texts.
- Encourage your child to express opinions about texts.
- Talk about letters, sounds, words, sentence patterns and interesting features in texts.



Encouraging Reading

To ensure that your child is encouraged to become a reader, consider the following questions.

- Is my child read to every day?
- Does my child see others reading at various times?
- Is a comfortable place provided where my child can be read to? Does my child like this 'space'?
- When reading aloud, is the tone of voice changed for different characters, or to show emotion and excitement?
- Are reading materials chosen that capture my child's interest? Is my child encouraged to select the story to be read?
- Is attention paid to how my child is responding to the story?
- Is the reading stopped when my child loses interest?
- Is my child encouraged to join in while being read to, e.g. *turning the pages, holding the book, allowing them to 'read' the bits they remember?*
- Is my child given sufficient time to answer when questions are asked?
- Are ideas in the story linked with things that happen in my child's life?
- Is my child encouraged to take notice of print, e.g. *find letters from his or her name?*
- Is my child encouraged to retell or act out stories he or she has heard?



Reading to and with Your Child

Set aside a regular 'special' time every day when you read to and with your child.

Things to do before reading

- Allow your child to select the book and discuss the reasons for the selection.
- Encourage your child to look at the title and cover of a book and talk about what it might be about.

Things to do while reading

- Sometimes follow the words with your finger from left to right as you read.
- Point out key words in the text and explain words your child may not know.
- Ask a lot of questions, e.g. "*What is happening now? What do you think will happen next? Why is he or she doing that?*"
- Answer your child's questions even if it interrupts the flow of the story.
- Encourage your child to look at the pictures for clues to predict what might happen or to help decide what an unknown word might be.
- Act out parts of the story, e.g. *Rosie the hen went for a walk across the yard.*
- Put aside a book if your child has lost interest and choose another.

Your child may want to 'read' the book or sections of it along with you or even by him or herself. Encourage your child's 'reading' even if it is not correct. Give plenty of praise and don't dwell on mistakes.

Things to do after reading

- Talk about the book and encourage your child to re-read parts of the story with you.
- Talk about the characters, plots and settings of stories, e.g. "*Which was your favourite character? Where did the story take place?*"
- Discuss what was learnt from informational books, e.g. "*What did you find out about spiders?*"
- Compare the people and events in books with those in your own lives.
- Challenge your child (in a fun way) to find words in the story that begin with the same letter as his or her name.

Selecting Texts

What makes a children's book 'good'? The real test of a 'good' book is your child's reaction to it. If it interests the child who reads or listens to it and captivates their attention it will help them discover the joy of reading.

To discover 'good books' for your child:

- encourage your child to select books to be read to him or her
- select appropriate books based on your child's special interests
- make use of book and audio tape sets, CD-ROMS, video or film versions of any books read
- make use of everyday print material that comes into the home such as cards, newspapers, magazines, comics and advertising brochures
- encourage your child to share books read in school with family members at home. Likewise, encourage your child to share books read at home with teachers and school friends.

Look for texts that:

- rhyme
- have repeated familiar phrases. Repeated key words and catchy sentences or phrases are easy for your child to remember so she or he can join in with the reading
- have a predictable story where the action moves quickly
- have colourful illustrations that bring the text to life and give clues to the meaning of unfamiliar words
- extend personal experiences so children become aware of what happens in the world around them.



Using Everyday Print

Draw attention to print on everyday items such as packages, jars and cans. Point to the words and talk about them, e.g. *"This says Cornflakes. It starts with a C. That is the first letter of your name, Carol."*

Point out print that is part of your child's daily life, e.g. *signs in shopping centres or on buildings, menus*. Ask your child to point out letters or words they know. Everyday outings are an opportunity to show your child how print relates to his or her life.

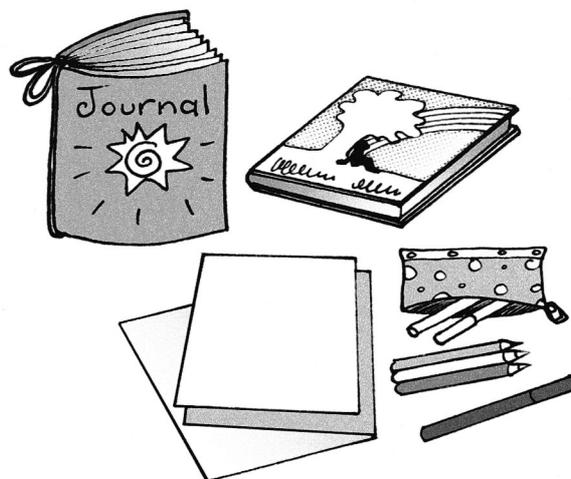
Discuss advertisements that you both read and/or have seen on television. Talk about the effect they have on you.



Reading and Writing Links

Talk about associating letters with sounds both when reading and writing.

- Print your child's name while the child watches. Talk to your child as you write, explaining why you are doing it, e.g. *"I am writing your name on your school bag so everyone will know who it belongs to."* As you write the letters say the sound each letter represents, e.g. *M a t t*.
- Write shopping lists in front of your child and talk about what you are doing.
- Set up a home message board and write a message each day, e.g. *Tonight we are going to Grandma's for dinner*. Allow your child to compose the message sometimes. Read the message several times throughout the day so you emphasise the point that printed messages remain the same.
- Encourage your child to write messages for different family members. Leave plenty of writing materials, e.g. *paper, pencils and crayons*, in an easily accessible place.
- Write down a story your child tells you. The story can be about a special event or one you make up together. Let your child add drawings, glue on items like magazine pictures they have collected, or attach a photograph. Keep the new 'book' and read it often.



Developing Word Knowledge

Draw your child's attention to words that are part of their daily life. Point out and read aloud any everyday print, e.g. *cereal packets, traffic signs, billboards*. Make everyday outings an opportunity to show your child how print relates to his or her life.

Many of the words written in texts occur again and again, e.g. *and, but, the*. If your child is to become a fluent reader he or she will need to learn to recognise these words immediately. Challenge your child to find the words in other places. Do this in a fun way so the child does not feel they are being 'tested'.

Talk about and help your child to recognise words that are meaningful to them, e.g. *name of their street, town, school, pet, friends*.

Magnetic letters can be used to learn about letters and spell words. While you work in the kitchen, your child can pick out letters and try to spell words, placing them on the refrigerator. Encourage your child to use what they know about letters and sounds to spell as best they can.

When talking about words, make connections between the letters and the different sounds they make, e.g. "*This is the letter 'c' and it makes the sound /c/ as in 'cat' but in this word 'city' it makes /s/.*"

Where appropriate, continue to place labels around the home. These could include labels on:

- personal items, e.g. *This is where John keeps his books.*
- household items, e.g. *The television can be turned on at 5 p.m.*

These labels should be written in full sentences as this helps your child to:

- make a connection between spoken and written words
- understand that we speak in connected phrases and sentences
- understand that the printed word remains the same.



Building a Love of Reading

There are many ways to encourage your child to be a reader and for them to develop a love of reading. Try any of the following suggestions.

- Give books as presents.
- Give books as a treat, e.g. *after school instead of buying an ice cream.*
- Teach songs and action rhymes. Encourage your child to sing and say these by him or herself. Be prepared to offer help where needed.
- Have a selection of reading materials such as comics, magazines or books available at all times, e.g. *when travelling, when waiting for an appointment or when visiting friends.*
- Have a special place where books are kept.
- Set aside a time for reading.
- Encourage all family members and visitors to the house to participate in reading or being read to.
- Encourage children to select their own books.
- Have a family subscription to a magazine, e.g. *National Geographic.*
- Encourage your child to exchange books with friends.
- Talk about books whenever possible.
- Display your own collection of books.

Supporting Comprehension

Talking to your child about what you have been reading together is a wonderful opportunity to make connections with his or her life, in order to develop understanding of the text. Asking questions is one way for your child to respond to texts. Different types of questions will provide more information about your child's understanding of the text.

'Right There' Questions

'Right there' questions focus on what the author said. The answer is often 'right there' in the text or pictures. They usually begin with *who*, *when*, *where* or *what*. It is helpful to follow up these types of questions with a further question that asks the child to clarify their answer, e.g. "*Can you show/read me the part that says that in the book?*"

'Think and Search' Questions

The answers to these questions can be found in the text but not necessarily in the one place. The child has to 'put the answer together' from various sections or sentences in the text, e.g. *How are and alike?* These questions are sometimes the *how* and *why* questions.

'Author and Me' Questions

These questions require the child to base the answer on the text but also draw on their own previous experiences to reach an answer. The answers are not wild guesses; they should be probable, not just possible, e.g. "*I wonder why ...*" "*Are princesses always beautiful?*"

'On My Own' Questions

These questions ask for the child's own opinions or judgements. The answers are not found in the text at all, e.g. "*Did anything happen in the story that has ever happened to you? Tell me about it.*" "*How have you acted when you were ... (happy or scared)?*"

It is not necessary to ask each type of question every time a story is read. Sometimes your child will stop and ask you questions, and other times you may ask the questions and direct your child's attention to specific aspects of the story. This should always be a fun way to explore the story or information further, not a time when the child feels 'tested'.

Using Computers

Computers can't replace reading but they can support what your child is learning.

Many computer programs (also called software) offer activities that can both grab your child's interest and teach good lessons. Children have fun using some of the colourful, action-filled programs. It is also valuable if you spend time with your child while they are using the computer.

By using computer reading programs your child can:

- hear stories
- read along and interact with what's on the computer screen
- play with objects and characters on the screen to learn about letters and sounds, rhyming words, repetitive phrases, and other skills important in learning to read
- command the computer with their voice, record and play back the recording so that they can hear themselves reading
- write simple stories
- add pictures and characters to stories and have them read back
- make and print their own books
- gain praise and see improvement in language abilities.

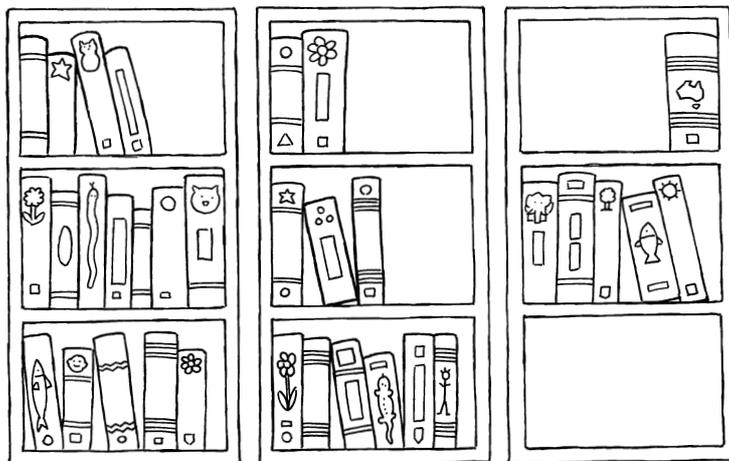
Note: By searching the Web, you can find sites that have free interactive books and activities that your child might enjoy.



Using the Library

Visiting the library is a great way to encourage your child's imagination and learning as well as providing an opportunity for you to show your child that you value books and reading.

- Make library visits a regular activity.
- Introduce your child to the librarian. Let your child know that the librarian is there to help.
- Get a library card for yourself and your child.
- Use the card catalogue or computer with your child to look up book titles and favourite topics.
- Ask the librarian to help you both find interesting books that your child can read.
- Look through the books with your child.
- Have your child choose the books to take home.
- Encourage your child to attend library storytelling time, 'summer' reading programs and 'special holiday' activities.



Supporting Phonemic Awareness and Graphophonic Knowledge Through Games

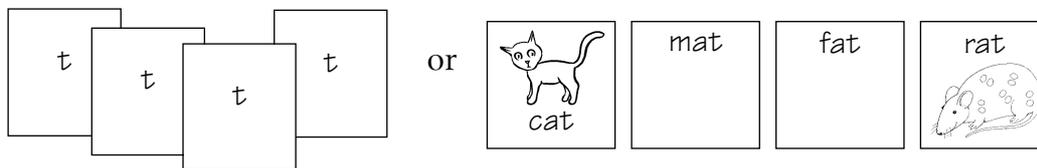
'I Spy ...'

- Begin by saying "I spy with my little eye something that ...", and continue by adding "begins with t", or "rhymes with bear", or "ends with at".
- Invite your child to guess the word.

Snap

Use the format of a traditional Snap game.

- Make up a set of cards that match in some way, e.g.



- Deal out all the cards to the players.
- In turns, each player overturns one card from his or her hand and places it face up on the table, forming a central pile.
- When an overturned card matches the one on top of the central pile, that player places his or her hand on the central pile, says SNAP, and gives the category for the Snap. The player then takes all of the cards to add to his or her hand.
- Play continues in this way until one player has all the cards.

Concentration

Concentration is a game that invites players to exercise concentration and memory to locate matches from a given selection of cards placed face down. The cards used for Snap can also be used for Concentration.

- Make a set of cards with letters, words or pictures. The cards could include:
 - Words that begin with the same sound, e.g. *ship, shop, shoe*
 - Words that rhyme, e.g. *bear, tear, wear*
 - Words that have the /e/ sound spelt the same way, e.g. *leaf, beach*.
- Place all cards in the pack face down on the table.
- In turns, each player overturns two cards (one at a time), attempting to match them in some way, e.g. *they rhyme, start with the same letter*.
- If there is a match, the player states what that is, keeps the cards and has another turn. If there is no match, the cards are replaced exactly where they were, face down.
- The game continues in this way until all the cards are matched. The winner is the player with the most matched pairs.

Supporting Phonemic Awareness and Graphophonic Knowledge Through Games

Snap and Clap

Snap and Clap makes use of rhythm and repetition to encourage your child to focus on rhyming words. The focus of the game is on providing a rhyming word, not on maintaining a complicated clapping and snapping pattern.

- Begin with a simple snap, clap rhythm and then say a word. Challenge your child to repeat the snap, clap rhythm and provide a rhyming word at the end.

For example, snap, snap, clap (you say) *light*

 snap, snap, clap (your child says) *right*

 snap, snap, clap (you say) *might*

Continue until you run out of rhyming words. The focus should always be on the rhyming words, not following a complicated clapping pattern.

A Trip to the Moon

- Begin the game by saying “We’re going on a trip to the moon. You can come if you bring *something*.” The ‘something’ will depend on the category you choose, e.g.

syllables – “You need to bring something that has two parts to its name, e.g. *rocket, ticket, burger*”

rhymes – “You need to bring something that rhymes with honey, e.g. *funny, sunny, money*”

matching – “You need to bring something that starts with *sh*, e.g. *ship, shoe*”

- Have the players take turns to say “I will bring a ...”
- Continue the game for a specified length of time or until the choices have run out.

What Could It Be?

What Could It Be? involves the creation of clues, presented orally, for your child to solve. Create riddles for your child to solve. For example, you might start by saying, “*I’m thinking of something in the room whose name has two parts. It is made of glass and you can see through it. What is it?*”

What Could It Be? clues can be:

– rhyming words, e.g. “*I’m thinking of an animal. The animal’s name rhymes with ‘pear’.*
What could it be?”

– beginning sounds, e.g. “*I’m thinking of an animal that’s name begins with /b/.*
What could it be?”

Hunting for Words

Challenge your child to go ‘hunting’ for words/objects/pictures at home that have something in common, e.g. *words beginning with /tr/, ending with /ing/ or rhyming with ‘lake’.* Children often enjoy this sort of challenge and may like to take their discoveries to school to share with the teacher.

Supporting Phonemic Awareness and Graphophonic Knowledge Through Games

Odd One Out

Odd One Out assists your child to identify words or parts of words that vary. A series of four words is presented. Three of the words have something in common. The fourth will be the 'odd one out'. Your child needs to select the odd one and suggest why it does not fit.

Depending on the words chosen, this activity can be used to develop an understanding of:
syllables – “Listen while I say four words: *monkey, lion, elephant, zebra*. Tell me which has more parts to its name.”

rhymes – “Listen while I say four words: *coat, boat, goat, balloon*. Tell me which one doesn't rhyme.”

matching Sounds – “Listen while I say four words: *beach, boat, seal, bean*. Tell me which one has a different middle sound.”

As an extension of this activity, do not give the criteria and ask your child to pick the odd one out. For example, “Listen while I say four words: *window, water, apple, wardrobe*. Which does not belong?” When you first begin this activity, make sure the words differ in only one aspect as this makes it easier for your child to identify the difference.

Tic Tac Toe

Tic Tac Toe is played in the same way as Noughts and Crosses. However, specified letters, patterns or words are used to create a sequence of three diagonally, up or down, instead of noughts and crosses. For example, you may write words that begin with 'st' and your child may have to write words beginning with the letter 't'.

tap	tap	stick
stop	star	tip
top		

If your child is having difficulty thinking of words to add, you could both make a list of words prior to beginning Tic Tac Toe.

Alternatively, have cards with pictures and/or words on them and have your child place their word onto a space while saying what it is.