Tips for Supporting Your Child’s Reading

First and foremost, ENJOY reading with your child. Reading should always be a pleasurable activity and it can be counterproductive if it becomes a battle of any kind. It is very important to model a positive attitude around reading.

Where possible, try to set a routine around reading. Children love timetables and benefit from knowing when they are doing set tasks. One of the first things that the children do upon entry into the classroom is to look at the timetable for the day! Establish a timetable for your day and determine when reading will fit into that.

Designating a special reading area or spot can be fun as well as beneficial. This distraction-free zone might have some fluffy pillows or a comfy chair to sit on. Just having a special corner of a room for reading will help.

Be a great reading partner to your child. Try to encourage as well as support your child by being patient and asking questions along the way. Here are a few tips:

* Discuss the front cover and back cover. What do you think this story might be about? Look at who wrote the book and illustrated the pictures. You may want to read further books by the same author if this is possible.
* Take a ‘picture walk’ through the book, talking about the things you see, what might happen on the next page, ask open questions and acknowledge and praise answers.
* Let your child be in control of the book: turning the pages, pointing to the words, setting the pace.
* Encourage your child to use their phonics to support their reading. This will depend on their individual stage of reading. You might be looking at the initial sound of the word, sound blending initial sounds to read words (c a t), sound blending longer words that include digraphs (two letters making one sound, ie d i sh) or words that include trigraphs (three letters making one sound, ie n igh t).
* Remember to look at the pictures that accompany the writing. Do they give you an idea of what the words might be about?
* If your child gets stuck, allow about 4 to 5 seconds for him/her to work it out. If your child can’t work it out in that time, they probably won’t be able to. Don’t make a fuss or show displeasure but tell them the word and show how you know what it says using techniques such as sounding it out and breaking it up. Sometimes you need to tell them that it is a tricky word and they just have to learn it. Write the word down and practise it later, maybe looking for it again on another page.
* Encourage your child to track the words with their finger as they read.
* You can break down a word into syllable chunks: yes/ter/day
* Skip over the word and read the rest of the sentence. What word can you think of that begins with its first letter that would make sense?
* It is okay to gently correct mistakes and reread the entire sentence. Remember to tell your child what a great job that they are doing!
* If your child is reluctant to read, try paired reading. For most, begin by reading together. The child is in charge of pace by moving his/her finger along the text, so you may have to read slower than you would like to begin with. If the child wishes to read alone, they tap the book (or other agreed symbol) and you stop reading.
* Pause in the reading every now and again to talk about what has been read, anything funny that has happened, how it could relate to your child’s own experience, or to ask questions to ensure understanding. When a child is at the stage of relying heavily on blending to read, they can lose the meaning of the text and of what is happening in the story.

Intervene as much as necessary or as little as possible. And remember to praise, praise, praise!