

Top 10 tips on how to hear your child read aloud to you

1. Try to get in the habit of having your child read to you every day. Choose a quiet, undistracted time and snuggle up.
2. For under-7s, 5 - 10 minutes is usually long enough. Little and often is best.
3. If it's a new book, always start by having a look at the book's cover, title, pictures and characters.
4. When your child tries to 'sound out' words, encourage the use of phonetic letter sounds rather than 'alphabet names'. So for 'cat' you'd say c-a-t; not CAT.
5. Don't pressurise if he or she's reluctant. If your child loses interest, then do something else and come back to it at a better time.
6. Maintain the flow. If your child mispronounces a word don't interrupt immediately. Instead allow opportunity for self-correction. It's better to tell a child some unknown words or give clues from the pictures to keep things moving rather than insisting on their trying to build them all up from the sounds of the letters.
7. Use the *pause*, *prompt*, *praise* technique. If they make a mistake, *pause* for a few seconds to see if they self-correct, then *prompt* by asking: "Does that makes sense?" Or give the sound they're struggling with, or help them sound it out. Then *praise* them for finishing the page or trying hard.
8. Be positive. Don't correct every word if what they're reading makes sense. Say they say 'his dad' and it says 'his father' – just carry on.
9. If your child says something nearly right to start with, that's fine. Don't say "No, that's wrong," but "Let's read it together", and point to the words as you say them. Only help if they're really stuck and boost your child's confidence with constant praise for even the smallest achievement.
10. Make sure the book is the right level to build up your child's confidence. Struggling with a book with lots of unknown words is pointless for your child. Flow gets lost and words can't be understood. You need to smooth their path because discouraged children can easily become reluctant readers.
11. Remember, there's more to being a good reader than just being able to read the words accurately. Always talk to your child about the book; about the pictures, the characters and ask them what their favourite part was. You'll then be able to see how well they've understood and help them develop better comprehension skills.

FINAL TIP

Screens – be they digital or the TV – are a fixture in all our children's lives now. Did you know that just by turning the subtitles on you can double the chance of your child becoming good at reading? They won't even know you've done it and it will work its magic by itself.