

# Helping your child at home

An activity guide to support Early Reading and Phonics



St Martin de Porres Primary School



# Getting Started

**Sharing books** - Always remember that we teach phonics to help our children learn to read and write and in order to do this successfully they need to love books! The best way to help your child is to read as many books as possible in both English and your child's home language. Read anything that your child is interested in (including magazines, menus, etc). You don't have to read all (or any) of the words each time. Remember to use silly voices, make sound effects, pull faces, act things out, talk about what you can see, talk about what you both think and feel and have fun!

**Unofficial homework** - Encourage your child to tell you what they have done at school today. Sharing new songs and rhymes is something that you can easily do when you are busy with something else e.g. cooking, cleaning, driving in the car.

**Give everything a name** - Build your child's vocabulary in both English and their home language by talking about interesting words and objects. For example, "Look at that aeroplane! Those are the wings of the plane. Why do you think they are called wings?"

## The Sounds of Letters

### Tips for teaching your child the sounds:

- ◆ It is important for a child to learn lower case or small letters rather than capital letters at first. Most early books and games use lower case letters and your child will learn these first at school. Obviously you should use a capital letter when required, such as at the beginning of the child's name, eg. **Paul**.
- ◆ When you talk about letters to your child, remember to use the letter sounds: **a buh cuh duh e ...** rather than the alphabet names of the letters: **ay bee see dee ee** . The reason for this is that sounding out words is practically impossible if you use the alphabet names. eg. **cat, would sound like: see ay tee**
- ◆ When saying the sounds of **b, d, g, j** and **w** you will notice the 'uh' sound which follows each, for example buh, duh... You cannot say the sound without it, however, try to emphasise the main letter sound.
- ◆ If you are unsure of pronunciation look on [www.youtube.co.uk](http://www.youtube.co.uk) and search 'Articulation of Phonemes'.

## General tips to support reading

**Once is never enough!** - Encourage your child to re-read favorite books and poems as well as their school reading scheme book. Re-reading helps children read more quickly and accurately.

**Dig deeper into the story** - Ask your child questions about the story you've just read. Say something like, "Why do you think he did that?" (you could use the 'questions to get more from your child's reading book' for some varied ideas.)

**Take control of the television** - It's difficult for reading to compete with TV and video games. Encourage reading as a distraction free activity.

**Be patient** - When your child is trying to sound out an unfamiliar word, give him or her time to do so. Remind to child to look closely at the first letter or letters of the word.

**Pick books that are at the right level** - Help your child pick books that are not too difficult. The aim is to give your child lots of successful reading experiences.

**I read to you, you read to me** - Take turns reading aloud at bedtime. Kids enjoy this special time with their parents.

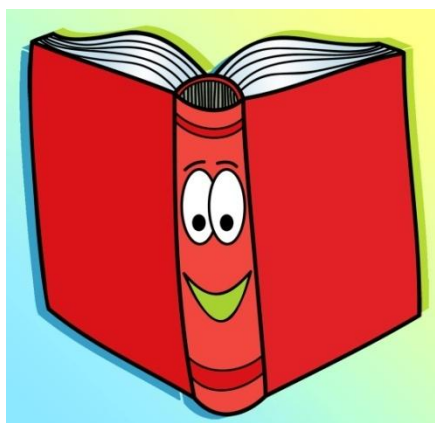
**One more time with feeling** - When your child has sounded out an unfamiliar word, have him or her re-read that sentence. Often kids are so busy figuring out a word they lose the meaning of what they've just read.

**Act out the story**- if it is a familiar story you could make some puppets and re-tell the story. Encourage the children to use the language patterns in the story. E.g. 'We're going on a bear hunt'.



## Questions to help you get more from your child's reading book

<p><b><u>Book introduction</u></b></p> <p>Who is the author?</p> <p>What can you see on the front cover?</p> <p>What do you think this book is going to be about?</p> <p>Does the blurb give us any more clues?</p> <p>Who do you think the characters are going to be?</p>	<p><b><u>Understanding what you have read</u></b></p> <p>What do you think is happening here?</p> <p>What happened in the story?</p> <p>What might this mean?</p> <p>Which part of the story best describes the...?</p> <p>Which words or phrases do this?</p> <p>What part of the story do you like the best?</p>	<p><b><u>Giving reasons</u></b></p> <p>What makes you think that?</p> <p>How do you feel about?</p> <p>Can you explain why?</p> <p>I wonder why the author...?</p> <p>Which words has the author used to show that this character is funny/naughty/mean/kind?</p>
<p><b><u>Discussing the story</u></b></p> <p>Could this book be better?</p> <p>Is it as good as.....?</p> <p>Which did you prefer? Why?</p> <p>Who was your favourite character?</p> <p>Which was your favourite part of the story?</p>	<p><b><u>Recalling information from the book</u></b></p> <p>Where does the story take place?</p> <p>What did he/she/it look like?</p> <p>Who was he/she/it?</p> <p>Where did he/she/it live?</p> <p>Who are the characters in the book?</p>	



## Games to play with your Nursery child

**Toy sounds** – When your child is playing with their toys encourage them to make the right sounds. Farm animals, train sets, vehicles, dolls etc are great for this. Help your child to notice these sounds around and about. E.g. Listen to the sound that cars, trucks and fire engines make in the street. Practise making these noises, then use them with car, truck and fire engine toys.

**Big ears** – Cup your hands around your ears and listen to sounds all around. Talk about what sounds you can hear. Try doing this in the house, in the street, in the park, on the beach etc. Talk about the sounds: Are they loud or quiet? Are they short or long? Can you make a similar sound with your voice?

**Shake it all about** - Make simple shakers by filling plastic bottles or tubs with rice, pasta, pebbles etc. Play with them and talk about the sounds that they make. Are the sounds soft, sharp, smooth, jiggly, scratchy?

**Tap it out** - Use the shakers above or use drums (pots and pans and wooden spoons are perfect) to play along with songs, rhymes and the radio. Try making the loudest sounds that you can then the quietest sounds that you can. Tap out simple rhythms. Can your child repeat the rhythm back to you?

**Interesting instruments**- If you see or hear instruments being played either in real life or on TV, talk about the sounds that the instrument makes. Which instruments does your child like the sound of best? Can they tell you why? Can they imitate the sound with their voice?

**Song time**- Sing your child's favourite songs, ones they have learnt at school, songs you remember from childhood or songs on CDs you have at home. Encourage children to use their bodies to make sounds to go along with their singing – stamping, clapping, patting knees etc.

**Sound effects**- Read stories and encourage children to make sound effects with their body – stomping, knocking, clapping, scratching etc.

**Rhyming books** - When children are really familiar with a particular book, try pausing before the rhyming word. Encourage your child to fill in the missing word.

**Clap it out**- Encourage children to think about the rhythms in words. Say simple nursery rhymes and clap along with one clap for each syllable. Repeat with knee taps, head pats or stamps.

**Talking about toys** - Talk about your child's toys and say something about them that alliterates. It doesn't have to make much sense.

Thomas the train travels on the tracks.

Lion likes to lick lollies.

Hippo huddles and cuddles me with his hairy head.

Can your child make suggestions? This is a tricky skill and it will take time. Praise them for trying and making suggestions even if they don't alliterate.

**Quick draw** - When drawing together, try drawing a snake and a sock. Point out that these things both begin with a 's' sound. Make the hissing s sound. Add some more 's' pictures e.g. snail, spider etc. Your child may be able to suggest some ideas as well.

**Voice play** - Encourage your child to use their voice to make a wide range of sounds.

E.g. At the park:

Going up a ladder – **clunk, clunk, clunk**

Coming down a slide – **whoosh**

On a roundabout – **wheee**

Bouncing a ball – **boing**

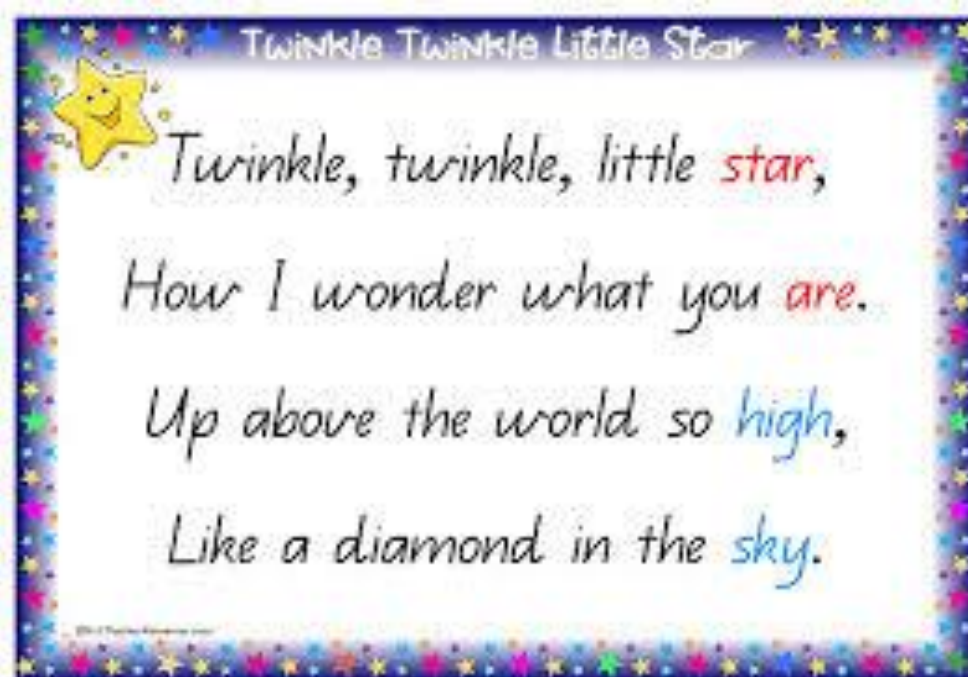
**Pulling faces** - Play around with moving your mouth in different ways e.g waggling your tongue, opening as wide as possible, smiling wide, frowning, blowing lips etc. You may want to do this to music or it can be a fun bath time game. Make a range of sounds e.g oo, ee, sh, th. Exaggerate your mouth shape while you are doing this to encourage your child to copy your mouth shape. It can be fun to do this while you are both looking in a mirror.

### **Odd-one Out**

Say a number of words, all but one of which begin with the same sound. See if your child can pick out the odd one. It can be helpful to have the corresponding objects there for the child to look at.

### **I-Spy**

For small children the usual way of playing that starts 'I spy with my little eye something that begins with ....' can be too difficult. You can make this easier by providing a clue. 'I spy with my little eye something that barks and begins with d'.



# Games to play with your Reception child

## Oral Blending games

**Robotic talking** - Words are made up from sounds and children need to be able to hear these sounds individually. Sometimes when you are playing you can say words as if you were a robot (saying the sounds separately) and see if your child can work out what you are saying. Stick to short simple words that only have a few sounds in them. Make sure you are saying the letter sounds (p-i-g) not the letter names (pee-eye-gee). E.g.

Pass that p-i-g to me.

Sit d-ow-n.

Point to your t-ee-th.

Hop like a f-r-o-g.

As your child becomes familiar with this robot talking, see if they can say words in robot talk themselves?

**I spy** – Say the rhyme ‘I spy with my little eye something beginning with \_\_\_\_\_’ allow your child plenty of opportunities to guess what you have chosen, for example, ‘something beginning with t’ could be a tree, toy, tent or train.

**Point out print everywhere** - Talk about the written words you see in the world around you. Ask your child to find familiar words on each outing such as ‘McDonald’s’, ‘Coke’ or ‘Family Mart.’

**Playing with words** – Encourage your child to sound out the word as you change it from mat to fat to sat; from sat to sag to sap; and from sap to sip.

## Phoneme recognition games

**Looking for letters** – Ask your child to look for English letters whilst you are out and about. Can they find letters from their own name, letters they have learnt in school or letters that specific words begin with?

**Fast letter sorting** - You will need:

A large piece of paper with three hoops drawn on.

12 small pieces of card with letters written on (4 sets of 3 letters)

Choose 3 sets of letters – 2 which the child knows and one new one. Spread the letter tiles out on the table making sure they are all the correct way up. Encourage your child to sort the letters into the correct hoop using both hands, saying each letter as they move it.

**Letter discrimination** You will need: A 3x3 grid

Write the letter you are learning with your child onto half of the spaces (for example c). Fill the rest with other letters. Ask your child to cover all the c’s with a counter as quick as they can.

### **Fishing for Sounds**

You will need a few cards with individual letters. Attach a paper clip to each card. Using a small stick with a string and magnet, your child fishes for letter sounds. If your child can say the sound of the letter he/she wins the card, otherwise you win it.

### **Sounds Scrapbook**

Write a letter at the top of each page of a scrapbook. Concentrating on a few letters at a time collect pictures of objects that begin with those letters. Do not use as examples words where the first sound does not make its normal sound such as in giraffe, ship, cheese, thumb. Stick the pictures on the appropriate pages.

### **Ladder letters**

You will need: A ladder template

Make a pile of letter tiles (use a mixture of known and new letters). Place a counter at the bottom of the ladder and move up a rung for every letter they can read correctly. This game can be changed to covering spots on a ladybird, petals on a flower – go with your child's interests if possible.

**Letter sound bingo.** You will need: A 3x3 grid for each player and counters or coins  
Write some of the letters into the spaces on each card, making each card slightly different. The 'bingo caller' says each letter in turn and the players cover the letter up. The winner is first to fill their board. To make this game easier for new readers, show them the letter for them to match.

### **Common Objects**

Collect several objects that begin with the same sound and make a card with this letter sound on it. Make a second group of objects beginning with a different sound and a card to go with those.

Discuss the sounds of the letters on the two cards with your child and shuffle the objects. Separate the cards on the floor and ask your child to put each object near the sound that it starts with. This activity can help your child to "hear" the first sound of a word.

### **'What does it start with?' Box**

You will need:

- ◆ A box
- ◆ Several items each beginning with a different sound
- ◆ Corresponding letter cards

This game is similar to the common objects game above, but the emphasis now is on recognising the sounds the letters make. Ask your child to choose an object from the box, to think what its first sound is (remember it is the sound you are looking for rather than the alphabet name) and then to match the object with the relevant card.



## Tricky word games

**Bingo** – You will need: A board for each player and counters or coins  
The list of words your child is currently learning, for example their spelling list  
Write some of the words into the spaces on each card, making each card slightly different. The ‘bingo caller’ says each word in turn and the players cover the words up. The winner is first to fill their board. To make this game easier for new readers, show them the word for them to match.

**Matching pairs** – You will need: Small pieces of card or paper with the words your child is currently learning written on each. Each word will need to be written twice so you can search for a matching pair. Turn all the cards face down on the table. And take turns to turn over two. When a matching pair is found that player can keep them. The winner is the person with the most pairs at the end of the game.

**Snap** - Make a set of cards with words your child is learning written on. Ensure that each word is written on two separate cards. Shuffle up the cards and share them out. Each player takes turns to turn over their card, put it down and read the word. If it matches the previous card played, the first person to notice shouts 'snap!' and wins the pile. This game is best used to practise words your child knows fairly well, rather than new ones, as it's quite fast-paced.

Once your child knows a word reliably, you can take it out of the current pack of cards and bring in a new word. Every so often, play a game with the 'old' cards, so that your child doesn't forget them. It's a good idea to try and discard a known word and add a new word every day, once your child is getting the hang of learning new words.

## Further ideas...

### **Sentence Games**

This activity is quite useful when your child has been given an early reading book. Quite often parents say "He's not reading the book. He's remembering the story off by heart". This can happen. Some children become over-dependent on the picture clues and do not look for clues from the words.

### ***Making Sentences***

Read the book with your child so he/she is familiar with the story. Then simply use the first sentence from the reading book and copy it out on a strip of paper. Either write it out or if you use a word processor use a font such as Century Gothic (font size 36 at least). Leave a double space in between each word. Now cut up the sentence into the individual words. For example:



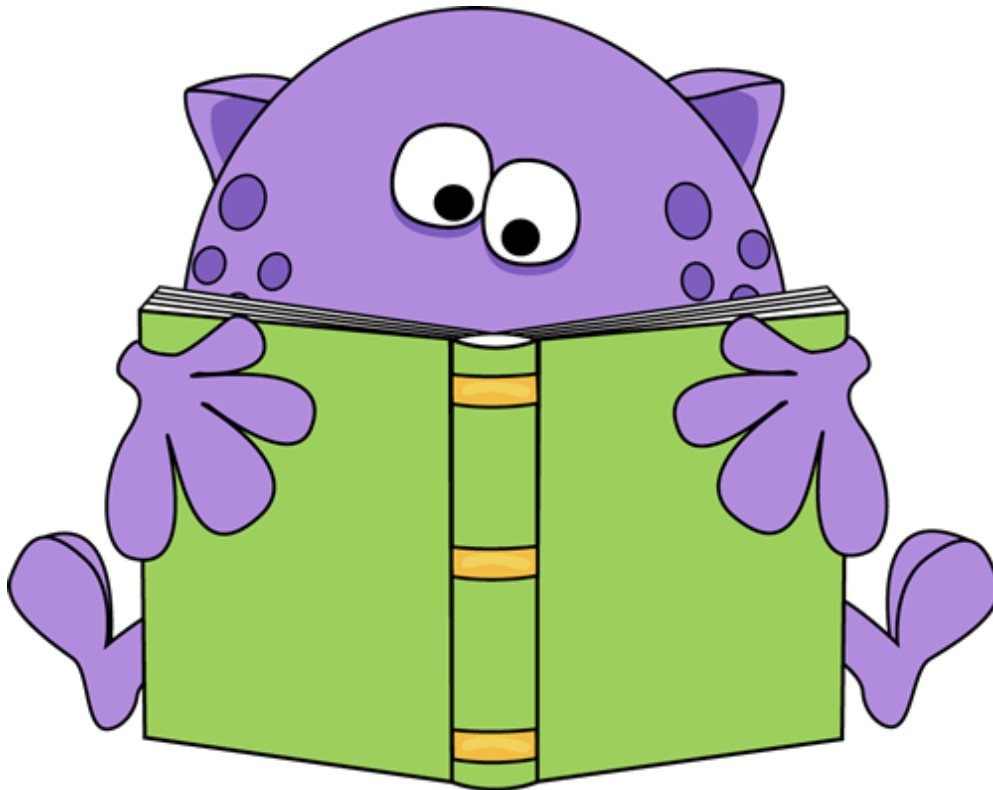
Ask your child to make the sentence, "This is a dog.", using the individual words. At first you will probably need to help. When he/she has made the sentence ask your child to read it to you and encourage him/her to point to each word with a finger.

Retain interest by only spending a few minutes a day on the activity. If your child makes a mistake do not say "That's wrong" immediately, because negative comments discourage. Ask your child to read the sentence and mistakes will often be self-corrected. If not, you can give clues such as, "What sound does **dog** start with?" If your child is still unable to read it, say positive comments such as "What a good try. You got all these right and only this part wrong. Well done." Then show your child the correct order.

**Be your child's #1 fan** - Ask your child to read aloud what he or she has written at school or for their homework. Be an enthusiastic listener.

**Create a book together** - Fold pieces of paper in half and staple them to make a book. Ask your child to write sentences on each page and add his or her own illustrations.

**Make up stories on the go** - Take turns adding to a story the two of you make up while riding in a car or bus. Try making the story funny or spooky.



## Useful Websites

- [www.phonicsplay.co.uk](http://www.phonicsplay.co.uk)- Phase 1- 4
- [www.ictgames.com](http://www.ictgames.com)- literacy and Mathematics
- [www.bbc.co.uk/schools/magickey](http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/magickey) - advanced skills on sentence building
- [www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/ks1/literacy/phonics/play/](http://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/ks1/literacy/phonics/play/) - Deep Sea Phonics
- [www.letters and sounds.com/phase2-games.html](http://www.letters_and_sounds.com/phase2-games.html)- phonic games
- [www.familylearning.org.uk](http://www.familylearning.org.uk)- Year 1 Phonics and Numbers
- [www.manicweb.co.uk](http://www.manicweb.co.uk) – Kung fu sentences
- [www.uptoten.com](http://www.uptoten.com)- sorting, songs and puzzles