

# Reading with children – the 7 year ditch!

Experts believe that reading for 10 minutes a day can make a dramatic difference to children's attainment

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Oxford University Press's Books Beyond Bedtime report launched in 2013 revealed that many parents stop reading with their children from the age of 7 – when experts believe that just 10 minutes a day can make a dramatic difference to their educational attainment.

With reading for pleasure at the heart of the new National Curriculum, this nationwide research involving nearly 1000 parents and school children aged 6 – 11 found 44% of 7-year-olds are rarely or never read to at home. This is despite the fact that nearly half of "reluctant readers" of this age said they would enjoy reading more if their parents read with them.

According to Unesco (the United Nations agency which promotes knowledge), the biggest single indicator of whether a child is going to thrive at school and in work is whether or not they read for pleasure. Young people who read outside of class are 13 times more likely to read above the expected level for their age.

James Clements, a former leader at an outstanding inner city primary school, comments: "Parents need to understand the huge impact reading with their children can make and how vital it is that reading for pleasure doesn't stop at the school gate but is continued at home. Recent figures suggest that as many as 27% of families paid for academic coaches over the summer holiday at a cost of up to £40 for a 45-minute lesson. It's a real shame that parents don't realise that just 10 minutes of reading with their child each day is one of the best ways they can support their education. Reading together 6 days each week means an extra hour of support for a child. It's definitely cheaper than 1 hour with a tutor and it could make a much bigger difference."

Here are six top tips to help parents of 7 – 11 year olds:

## 1. Make the time

Just 10 minutes of reading with your child each day is one of the best ways you can support your child's education.

## 2. Choose different types of books

Reading as wide a range of books as possible opens your child up to different types of language and different ways of writing. You and your child might take it in turns to choose what you read together; you might share a treasured book from your childhood; or they might introduce you to the latest playground craze. You might choose something challenging that stretches their understanding and introduces them to new ideas or you might curl up with an old favourite. You won't both love every book you share, but reading a wide range of different books can help children to develop their own taste in books and it can open them up to books and genres they wouldn't necessarily choose themselves.

### 3. Take turns to read

Sometimes you'll want to listen to your child read aloud – it's great for developing their fluency and expression and gives you the chance to check they're not struggling with any of the words. At other times you can read aloud, modelling expressive reading and letting them enjoy the story. It could depend on the book you've chosen. Finding ways to read together can be really effective and enjoyable – you might read a paragraph each or take over every time a certain character speaks. By both reading and listening your child gets the best of both worlds, learning more than if they simply read aloud to you or listen to you.

### 4 Talk about the book – asking your child questions

Asking for their opinion or for them to make predictions can be an important way of helping them to think about what they're reading. As a rule, open questions that begin with 'how' and 'why' tend to be more engaging rather than simple recall questions ('How do you think Mole is feeling as he enters the Wild Wood? Why?' might work better than 'What is Mole afraid of?'). If you can, try to get your child to refer back to the text to tell you how they know the answer ('How do you know he's afraid?'). Above all ask questions and talk about what you're reading because you are genuinely interested in what your child thinks, rather than just to check they can find the right answer.

### 5. Pay attention to the language

When reading we can often take children's understanding of words or phrases for granted. By checking they're following, explaining the meaning or even looking up unfamiliar words and phrases together, you can widen your child's vocabulary and support them to make wider sense of the story. Words and phrases are the bricks which writers use to build a story and understanding them is the key to unlocking the meaning of a passage.

### 6. Enjoy reading

Continuing to read with your child right through primary school can have great educational benefits, but it can also be ten minutes of respite from hectic family life to read, think and talk together. By all means ask questions and discuss vocabulary, but don't be afraid to lose yourselves in a good story too. Helping your child to love books is an important goal. You never know, that ten minutes of reading time might just stretch to twenty...