



Reading at Home – Ten Top Tips

We all know the immense benefits that reading at home provides for children, not only in *all* areas of their academic life but also in terms of their mental health and social and emotional wellbeing. It also provides a time to talk, to share and to bond. If your family have struggled to find time to read or fallen out of the routine, it could be the right time to establish (or re-establish) reading habits with your child/ren.

With this in mind, we wanted to share some top tips about reading at home. We do know this isn't always easy and that everyone's circumstances are different; we are here to support or advise you with any challenges you may face. Please do reach out to your child's class teacher if you are finding reading at home with your child difficult and they will be happy to work with you in this area.

- **Find a time that works for you**
For many families, bedtime is the perfect time to snuggle down with a story. It can help soothe children before sleep and many will be more keen to read as they perceive they are staying up late to do it! For others, they will be too tired in the evening and reading in the morning or straight after school works well. Many of our children enjoy reading to other family members over a video call.
- **Get into a routine (but don't be afraid to break it!)**
When a child knows that reading is part of the daily routine, it can help lessen the battle to start. However, sometimes plans need to change, so be flexible with yourself and your child in these instances. At Uplands, we recommend that children read daily but ask that this takes place a minimum of three times a week.
- **Mix up who reads**
Listening to your child read is incredibly important but you reading to them can be just as beneficial. When they are not having to decode the words, brain space is freed up for children to listen, enjoy and comprehend. If your child is tired, you could take it turns to read their reading book. You can also choose a more challenging story for you to read aloud to them. There's nothing quite like a good chapter book to keep them wanting to read night after night!
- **Share what you love**
Try and make reading something for you both to look forward to by choosing exciting and engaging books that you enjoy too. Which book could you not put down as a child? If you loved it, the likelihood is your child will too! If your child is reluctant at first, try to articulate why you loved it so much to pique their interest. Don't be afraid to put on voices when reading – your child will love it!

- **Get older siblings in on the action**

One of the greatest challenges can be trying to hear multiple children read regularly. Depending on the ages of your children, you may be able to choose a novel to read to siblings that they will all enjoy but you can also encourage older siblings to read to younger ones, and to listen to them read and give feedback. They may love being a teacher and can even write in their reading record. It will also help to reinforce their own learning.

- **Reading doesn't have to involve books**

Opportunities for reading can be found everywhere you go and reluctant readers will often be more engaged if they feel there is a purpose for reading. Instructions for games, recipes, magazines, comics and even the back of a cereal box will all help children to practise their reading skills. If your child asks a question about something they are curious about, encourage them to help you look up the answer.

- **Read for different reasons**

As teachers, we often talk to our pupils about different reasons for reading. Sometimes we read to find out information on a subject, sometimes for enjoyment and sometimes for challenge. We encourage children to relish the joy in successfully tackling a difficult text and thrashing out the meaning but, sometimes, we all need to read a simpler or more familiar book just for fun! If your child wants to read the same book a hundred times, that's fine... as long as they mix it up with some other reading material too!

- **Let reading spark conversations**

One of the greatest pleasures in reading with your child is finding out their opinions on new topics and discovering new concepts, ideas and vocabulary together. Don't be afraid to deviate as needed with their interests and questions – engagement and meaningful conversations with you are so beneficial for your child's development. If a topic comes up that you would both like to know more about, why not conduct some research together?

- **Make it fun!**

For younger children particularly, finding a love of stories is the most fundamental aspect of learning to read. Retelling well known stories (maybe with your child starring!), acting out stories, repeating refrains together, using funny voices and enjoying rhymes are all hugely beneficial to children's development. With older children, funny, interesting and exciting texts make the hard work of reading worth it for them. For reluctant readers, go with their interests where you can. If your child is struggling to find books that they enjoy, do speak to your child's teacher.

- **Give them praise**

We know that listening to your child read can be a painstaking experience at times! Learning to read requires so many processes to be simultaneously taking place in the brain and it can be extremely tiring for children – sometimes it may feel like they keep making the same mistakes again and again. However, the more they practise, the more they will progress, even if it is gradual. Try to help your child identify their successes: new sounds they have learned, a word they

managed to decode, a clever deduction they made or some lovely expression they used. This is particularly helpful for them if it was something they found difficult previously. Making notes in your child's reading record with them can help them to reflect on their progress and celebrate their achievements.