

Supporting your child with reading at home



At Ellesmere, we are truly passionate about reading and want to encourage all of our students to enjoy reading for pleasure. During the school day, your child will be taught how to read using our whole school phonics programme, Unlocking Letters and Sounds, in addition to being taught key communication and reading skills as part of the curriculum. We also take every opportunity to read for pleasure, whether as a class, in small groups or 1:1.

This handout will give you some suggestions for supporting your child at home with reading. These are generalised suggestions for all ages and abilities. If you are unsure which are suitable for your child, please contact their tutor in the first instance, who will be happy to offer some guidance.

Sensory Stories

Sensory stories are simple stories that use a mixture of text and sensory experiences to help bring the story to life.

You can create these at home cheaply and easily, with a little bit of time to prepare.

You can find links to some sensory stories, including lists of items you need and even links to sound clips here:

<https://inclusiveteach.com/sensory-story-collection/?amp>

<https://www.thechildrenstrust.org.uk/virtual-learning/sensory-stories>

There are also lots of videos on YouTube to help—just put ‘Sensory Stories’ into the search bar.



Story sacks

A story sack is a collection of items in a bag or container that can be used to support the telling of a story. This helps to make the story more accessible and 'concrete' for children.

You can buy ready made story sacks, but these can be quite expensive. You can make your own story sacks fairly cheaply—make sure you make a list of the items you need and start hunting round! You might even have some of the items in your house already if you choose a story based on a character your child already has an interest in such as Thomas the Tank Engine.



Word games

Word games help your child to focus on sounds and letters alongside developing their vocabulary. All of these skills will support them with reading.

- I spy—spot something nearby and give your child the sound or letter it begins with. They have to look around and try to guess what it is you have 'spied'
- Guess the animal—give your child a rhyming word and get them to guess the animal (e.g. "I rhyme with mat, I am a.....")
- Alphabet game—come up with a category (for example, animals) and take it in turns to work through the alphabet, thinking of a word that fits that category

There are also lots of board games that can help with reading, spelling and writing including Bananagrams and Scrabble. It's always worth checking the charity shops where you can usually pick these up cheaply.



Reinforcing phonics at home

We use the Unlocking Letters and Sounds Phonics Programme at Ellesmere, following their progression document at a pace that is appropriate to the needs of individual students.

There are lots of ways that you can reinforce phonics learning at home. To start with, ask your child's tutor which phonics phase and sounds they are working on. This will help you to make sure that you supporting them at the correct level.

Phase 1

If your child is working at Phase 1, this means that they are working on the foundation skills that will help them when they are ready to move on to learning specific phonemes and graphemes.

If your child is working within Phase 1, you can support them at home by:

- Helping them to recognise different sounds at home and in common places you visit—for example, recognising the difference between the doorbell and your phone ringing, or the tap running and the toilet flushing
- Listening to music together and tapping out the beat on parts of their body or a drum
- Sing simple action songs together—for example, 'Happy and You Know It'
- Sing simple rhyming songs together—for example 'Twinkle, twinkle little star'
- Look at books together—picture books are great for helping your child to develop a love for books and will also help them to understand how books work (e.g. holding it the right way up, turning pages)
- Look at a mixture of books together like non-fiction and books with photographs of real things as well as illustrated books. Interactive books are also great for developing an interest in reading—there are lots of books with flaps or sound buttons available



Phase 2 and above

If your child is working at Phase 2—5, this means that they will be working on specific phonemes and graphemes, as outlined on our website.

If your child is working at these Phases, you can support them at home by:

- Listening to them read daily—if they stumble on a word, encourage them to sound it out. If they still struggle, sound it out for them and encourage them to repeat it
- Ask questions about what they have read— you can do this regularly through the book to check your child understands what they are reading
- Revisit familiar books—it's okay if your child wants to re-read favourite books, even if those books seem a little easy for them
- Practice some of the Common Exception Words with them—these are words that are tricky to decode and so we teach them by sight initially. Your child's tutor will be able to tell you which ones your child knows and needs to work on

All phases

- Read to your child—even if they are a confident reader, there are lots of benefits to this. Remember to try and reduce distractions by turning off the TV and other devices
- Encourage a love for reading by having books easily accessible around the house— you don't need to spend lots of money; join your local library for free! Don't forget, all of our students also have access to our free online library via ePlatform
- Listen to books together—if you join your local library, you could listen to books for free too! Alternatively, you could download audiobooks on Audible and other similar apps
- Take every opportunity to develop reading skills—spotting items that begin with the same sound in the shops or sounding out the names of their favourite characters on TV—it all helps!
- Create a routine for reading together—this could be part of their bedtime routine or just after they've eaten their dinner, whatever works for you.
- Give books as presents—you don't have to spend a lot, you can pick up some bargains in charity shops or at shops like The Works
- Visit your local library and explore the range of books they have
- When watching the TV together, mute it and put the subtitles on instead

