

Reading Prompts For Parents

Parents often wonder how they can help to develop the reading skills of children who are already fluent readers. The best way is to continue to share books with your child, regularly listening to them read, sometimes reading to or with them, but also discussing books read in increasing depth.

To become good readers children need to develop skills in seven key areas and it can be useful to think about these when reading with your child.



Decoding: this is the skill that parents are generally most familiar with, and deals with the varying strategies used by children to make sense of the words on the page. Even fluent readers can be stumped by an unfamiliar word, and it is useful at these times to discuss the range of strategies used to make a sensible guess.

Retrieval and recall: early readers need to develop this skill, in order to locate important information and to retell stories and describe events. This skill also enables children to support their answers with evidence from the text.

Inference: reading between the lines. Encouraging children to make inferences based on clues in the text and their understanding of the context of the book will help them to develop this important skill.

Structure and organisation: as children read a wider range of text types, they need to be able to comment on the features of each and how they are organised. Discussing the presentation of the text, e.g. the use of subtitles to assist reading of a non-fiction text, and the author's reason for organising the text in this way, will support children's development in this area. Making links between the *purpose* of the text and its *organisation* is a useful place to start.

Language: specifically, thinking about the language choices made by writers, their possible reasons for making those choices and the effect the choices have on the reader. Discussing alternative choices and their effects can be a good way to begin discussion about the author's language and an opportunity to develop vocabulary generally.

Purpose and viewpoint: Who is the narrator of this story? What does the writer of this biography feel about his/her subject? Children need to understand that writers write for a purpose, and to be able to recognise that this will have an impact on the way a text is written. Newspapers and advertisements are perfect examples of this and can lead to lots of lively discussions.

Making links: as adults, we are constantly making links between ideas and experiences. Good readers connect the book they are reading with real life experiences; with other books read and stories heard; with films; and with the context in which they were written. A child reading 'Goodnight Mister Tom', for example, will need to place the story within the context that it was written to fully understand it. They might also link it with other stories read, such as 'Friend or Foe' or 'Carrie's War'.

Underneath, there are some questions linked to the above points, which we hope you will find useful. It is not necessary to ask every question each time your child reads, of course, but they may prove to be useful prompts to start a more focused discussion.

What has happened in the story so far?

What do you think will happen next?

Who is your favourite character? Why?

Who is the character you like least? Why?

Do you think the author intended you to like / dislike this character? How do you know?

Does your opinion of this character change during the story? How? Why?

Find two things the author wrote about this character that made him / her likeable?

If you met one of the characters from the story, what would you say to him / her?

Which part of the story is your favourite / least favourite? Why?

Would you change any part of the story? How?

Would you change any of the characters? How?

Which part of the story was the funniest/scariest/ saddest/ happiest? Find some evidence in the text to support your opinion.

What is the purpose of this book? How do you know?

Why is this page laid out in this way? Could you improve it?

Pick three favourite words or phrases from this chapter. Can you explain why you chose them?

Did this book make you laugh? Can you explain what was funny and why?

Have you read anything else by this author? Is anything similar?

Does this book remind you of anything else? How?

When do you think this book was written? How do you know? Does it matter? What would it be like if it was written now?

Do you think the title of the book is appropriate? What would you have called it?

What is the genre of the book: sci-fi, mystery, historical, fantasy, adventure, horror, comedy?
What are the features that make you think this?

Find two sentences which describe the setting.

Is the plot fast or slow moving? Find some evidence in the text, which supports your view.

If the author had included another paragraph before the story started what do you think it would say?

Would you like to read another book by this author? Why/ why not?

Of course, it doesn't have to be you asking the questions. Why not turn the tables and let your child ask you about your reading material?

The greatest encouragement for your child is to see you - their most influential role model - reading.

