Helping with reading: babies and pre-school children

How to start

Read yourself! Set a good example by showing your child that you read.

Point out words all around you. Tell your child what they say. Look at road signs, packets and shopping lists.

Use books as toys. Keep tough board books in the toy box and play with them together. Buy a bath book.

Visit your library – it's free to join! All libraries have children's sections and most local libraries have a storytelling session for the under fives every week.

Make time to read. Why not share a story every night? Make it as much a part of bedtime as brushing teeth

Keep books in your bag. A long wait in the doctor's surgery or at the bus stop can seem less boring if you share a book.

If English is not your family's first language: You can buy dual language books. You can talk about books and stories in any language.

How to help with reading

Look at the pictures. Ask lots of questions about the pictures and the story.

Spot words in books. How many times do familiar words come up?

Follow the words with your finger. This will help your child to learn them.

Spot letters. Encourage your child to spot the letters of their name in writing they see.

Turn off the TV! It's easier for your child to concentrate on the story when there are no distractions.

Let them pretend to read. Young children often like to pretend to read by making up the story themselves. This is a great start.

Teach them how to treat books. Teach your child how to hold books and turn the pages gently.

Let them read their favourites. Don't worry if they want to read the same books over and over. It's good practice.

Don't read for too long. A good ten minutes is better than a difficult half hour.

Activities to try at home

Make puppets by cutting figures out of card or mismatched socks and use these as props for a story. You could also use your child's toys and teddy bears.

Take photos of your baby and of familiar objects or places. Use these to make a book about your child.

For more information, please contact Reading Is Fundamental, UK (RIF) on 020 7828 2435 or visit our website at www.rif.org.uk