

## Information for parents/carers and families

# Reading at home

You and your family can make a real difference in helping your child learn to read, while also supporting your child's classroom reading program.

## What will be happening at school?

Teachers focus a lot on developing children's language, including their early reading and writing. They support children to develop a good vocabulary and the language they will need to become successful early readers.

Once children have learned some letters, they learn to sound them out and blend them together. This is called phonics. Phonics works by breaking most words down into their individual sounds. Once children have mastered the 44 sounds, they can read hundreds of words and make remarkably quick progress in their reading. In English, there are also a few words, used quite often, that can't be sounded out like this. These are words that children need to learn and practise.

Teachers use a very methodical way to teach phonics to children. They check children's progress regularly, including using the Phonics screening check in Year 1. Teachers often use phonics in listening and writing activities as well. For example, students may be encouraged to spell the way they hear the letters (phonetically) before they spell the words correctly. This helps them to understand how words are made up of sounds and that different letters combine to make certain sounds.

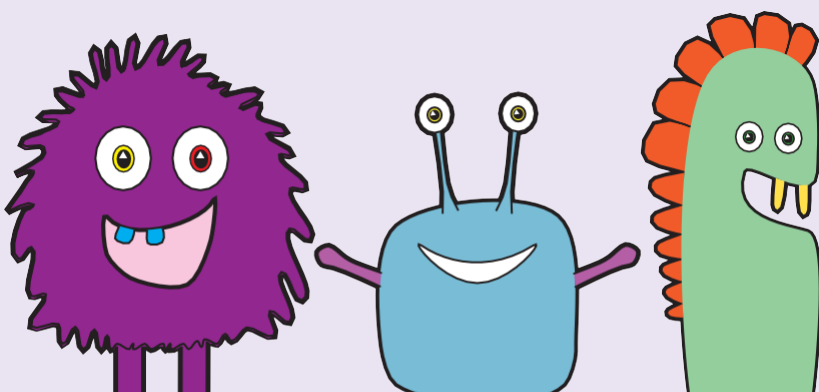
Schools may organise visiting times for you to watch the reading program in the classroom. They may also arrange coffee mornings or parent workshops to give you more information about the classroom reading program and advice on how to support your child.

## How can I support my child with reading at home?

Take the time to read to your child on a regular basis, such as at bedtime or after a snack when they come home from school. If possible, provide a quiet place with no distractions so they can focus on the task in hand. Try not to rush this special time with your child, as making reading fun is vital.

Reading to your child helps them to hear the language written in books and learn how to take in new information. Stories also introduce them to new and unfamiliar situations. Children who are read to at home—or read at home themselves—even if just for a few minutes every day, can make far greater progress than those who do not.

Teachers will choose the books your child brings home each week. Early on, teachers may only send home books for you to read to your child. Or they may give your child individual letters, words or sentences to practise reading. Later, they may send readers home for your child to read to you. These readers will contain words that they learning to 'sound out' at school. You may notice that their readers have a limited vocabulary. This is because, in the early stages of learning to read, words need to follow regular sound-symbol patterns, like *dog*, *fan* and *hop*. In the classroom, children are taught to work out the words for themselves: with practise, their reading will get better and they will become faster and more confident.



Learning to read can be very hard work for some young readers. Give your child plenty of time to sound out the letters and blend them into words. In the long run this hard work will pay off as they practise and recognise the letter patterns so that this becomes their key way of learning to read.

Some words can't be sounded out because they don't fit with the normal letter-sound patterns: words like *you*, *said*, *could* and *some*. We use many of these 'tricky words' frequently. Teachers may give your child lists of these words to take home to practise and you will find some in your child's readers. Your child's reading will improve the more they practise these tricky words. Rather than guessing words from a picture, be patient if your child stumbles over a tricky word that can't be sounded out. Simply give them the word and ask them to repeat it several times until they can remember it.

## Is there anything else I can do at home?

Children's language will develop more quickly if you and your family share stories from an early age. Extend their language by asking them to talk about what they have seen heard or done. When reading books together, talk about what is happening in the story. You could ask them to predict what might happen next. The 'five Ws' can be useful: *who*, *what*, *where*, *when* and *why*.

Even when children do not bring home 'readers', parents and older family members can play a very important role in helping children to see the links between books, stories and what happens in real life. For example, while reading *Cinderella*, you could talk about the similarities between a ball and a birthday party.

Simply talking to children about different or unusual words helps to develop their curiosity about language and the sounds within words. You can encourage this by playing creative word and sound games, or by singing nursery rhymes and songs, and by introducing special names, for example, the names of different dinosaurs.

Join a local library and read to your child. When selecting books to read to your child, choose topics that your child is genuinely interested in. You can find a good selection of reading material on the Premier's Reading Challenge website ([www.prc.sa.edu.au](http://www.prc.sa.edu.au)) and The Little Big Book Club site ([www.thelittlebigbookclub.com.au/](http://www.thelittlebigbookclub.com.au/)).

You may want to access online apps to support your child in learning phonics. There are a number of phonics apps on iTunes. Talk to your teacher to get advice on which ones to use, as many have been developed in the United States.

If you want more specific reading and phonics activities, please contact your child's classroom teacher.

