

"I Love Books!"

How to help your child become a great reader.

How to Help When Your Child Reads to You

A beginning reader often gets stuck or makes mistakes when reading out loud. Here's how to handle them.

- If your child is stuck on a word, wait five seconds and give him a clue (sound it out, look at the picture or reread the sentence). If he's still stuck, wait five more seconds, then give your child the word.
- If your child makes a mistake and his reading continues without a pause, ignore it.
- If your child makes a mistake and hesitates (a good sign), wait five seconds, then ask if what he read makes sense. If not, suggest looking at the problem words. If there's still not progress, give your child the word.

The Rule of Five

How do you know if a book is really too difficult for your child? Ask your child to read a page out loud. If he makes more than five mistakes on that page, it's time for you to take over the reading.

STOP!

And use the 5 finger rule when you choose a book!
Read a page in the middle of the book.
Put up one finger for every "clunk" you have.



0 fingers – too easy
1-3 fingers – just right
4-5 – quite hard – go slow!
5+ – too hard for now

Getting over the Grade 4 Slump

The most serious danger time for most children's reading isn't at the learning stage but when everybody thinks the job of learning to read is finished – around age 10. Many schools stop teaching the mechanics of reading by the end of Grade 3. At that point, kids are expected to know how to read well enough to apply it to science, geography, math problems and everything else that comes crowding into the curriculum. Unfortunately, the enormous job of learning to read has only begun. Just when children are progressing from simple chapter books to novels, many parents quit the nightly reading routine. Just when a child's sight vocabulary has to zoom from 3,000 simple words to hundreds of thousands in our English language, schools shift their emphasis from reading to writing and math.

Some kids get left behind, especially boys, who interests tend to not be addressed by the books that most school stock. "The boy problem is finally getting some worldwide attention," reports Rog, just back from a reading conference in New Zealand. "What we're learning is that fiction that boys enjoy is actually structured differently from that which girls like – with the possible exception of Harry Potter, which seems to appeal to everybody." As well, many 10-year old boys want to read nonfiction books and magazines that tie into their interests: sports, adventure and video games.

The message for parents is simple: keep reading with your kids to get them past the Grade 4 slump. At this point, they probably won't want to read to you, so you should pick up the reading again. Discuss the more difficult vocabulary and ideas in middle-schools novels. Let them voice their opinions about what they know, and ask about what they don't understand. Make sure that you have books at home that appeal to their interests.

And don't be a literary snob. Just because your child has the decoding ability to read J.R.R. Tolkien or Alice Munro doesn't mean he has the interest, experience or background that would give the reading serious value. Any "real" reader is also a reader of junk – everything from the backs of cereal boxes to silly joke books. Margaret Atwood read Nancy Drew as a kid; Pierre Berton read detective magazines. If it's Archie comics they love, then buy Archie comics.

How important is all this reading? "Essential," says Evan. "reading opens up whole worlds that kids would never experience otherwise. It stimulates their imaginations, prompts a sense of wonder and lets them marvel about the human experience." What more could parents want for their children?

Paul Kropp is the author of *How to Make Your Child a Reader for Life* (Random House, 2000), a former teacher and the father of five good readers. To read an excerpt from his book, visit www.canadianliving.com the week of March 19. Canadian Living, April 2001