

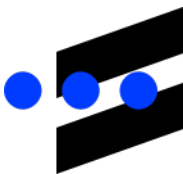
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**A PARENT'S GUIDE TO  
RAISING AN AVID READER**

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## Message From ADEK

**Dear Parents/Caregivers,**

The love of reading is one of the greatest gifts we can impart to our children. The ability to communicate our ideas and learn from the ideas of others is a critical part of the human experience, and the ability to read will open endless doors for your child.

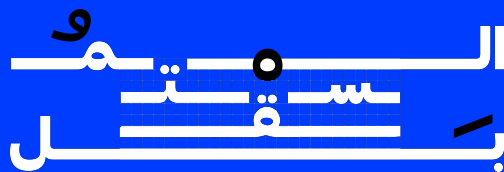
This month, as the UAE celebrates the National Month of Reading, ADEK has compiled a guide for you based on international research into reading development.

This guide will provide key information and simple strategies that you can use to support the reading journey of children from birth until early adolescence. As you go through this guide, it would be useful to remember that every child has a unique, individual reading journey, and that we can make this journey enjoyable and productive with encouragement and gentle guidance.

We hope that you will find this resource useful in helping your child become an avid reader.

Happy reading!

## The ADEK team



# Reading Matters

Reading benefits your child in many ways, and these benefits last a lifetime. Here are some ways that reading helps:

1. **Reading strengthens the brain:** A growing body of research indicates that reading activates our brain and increases connectivity between its different parts.
2. **Reading builds empathy:** Research shows that people who read fiction show a greater ability to understand other people's beliefs and feelings, allowing them to build better social relationships.
3. **Reading builds vocabulary:** Children who read books regularly develop a large vocabulary, which is critical to communicating effectively and with impact and can influence many areas of their academic and professional life in the future.
4. **Reading reduces stress:** 30 minutes of leisurely reading are as effective in relieving psychological distress as yoga and laughter.
5. **Reading improves academic performance:** Children who read for enjoyment every day perform better in reading tests at schools. They also build general knowledge which has a positive impact on their learning at school.
6. **Reading builds imagination and fosters creativity:** Reading allows your child to build their imagination by visualizing new worlds, characters and understanding new perspectives.
7. **Improving reading outcomes leads to better economic opportunities.** Global studies have concluded that better readers are more likely to obtain better paying jobs compared to their peers.

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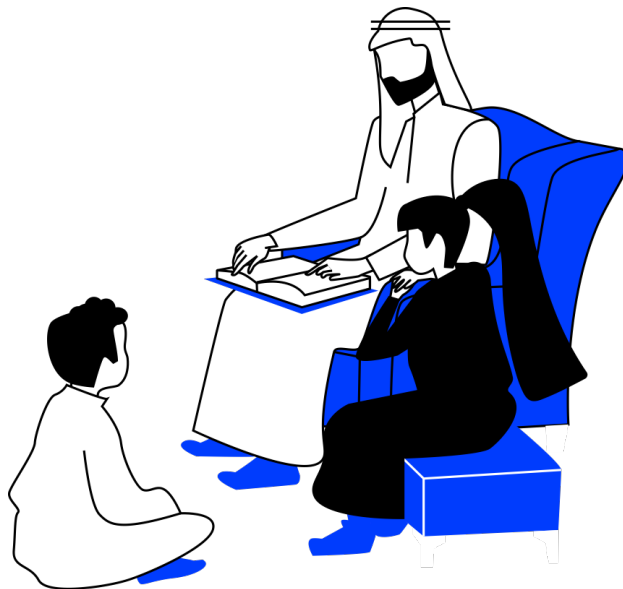
Sources: [Healthline](#), [Pearson](#), [Huffington Post](#)

# Reading at Home with Your Child Matters

You may wonder: As a parent or caregiver, how much of an impact can I have on my child's reading?

The short answer: A lot! Even newborn babies are receptive to voices and sounds that form the building blocks of language, and eventually, reading. It is never too early to start, and a few minutes a day will go a long way in making your child an avid reader. Here are some ways in which reading helps your family and child:

1. Relationship building: Reading helps to develop and strengthen a bond between you and your child. It allows you to spend time together and provides a common interest that you share with one another.
2. Increases your child's self-esteem: When you take a few minutes out of a busy day to read to, or with, your child, they will enjoy the undivided attention they receive from you.
3. Children read more, and better: The research is conclusive. Children who read at home are better prepared for school, and have greater reading achievement, language comprehension and expressive language.



Source: [National Literacy Trust](#)

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- Sources: Pearson, Hanover Research

- Reduce distractions: This is true for children and parents. Make time for reading and try to frame reading as a fun activity rather than a less interesting alternative to screen time.
- One way to do this is to have DEAR time. DEAR stands for Drop Everything And Read. Through DEAR, the whole family can set aside a time in the day where, no matter what each family member is engaged in, they “drop” what they are doing, and all read at the same time.

## Choosing What to Read



Encourage your child to read by exposing them to a variety of books in the library, bookshop and online. You can help your child to engage with books and build their reading skills in the following ways:

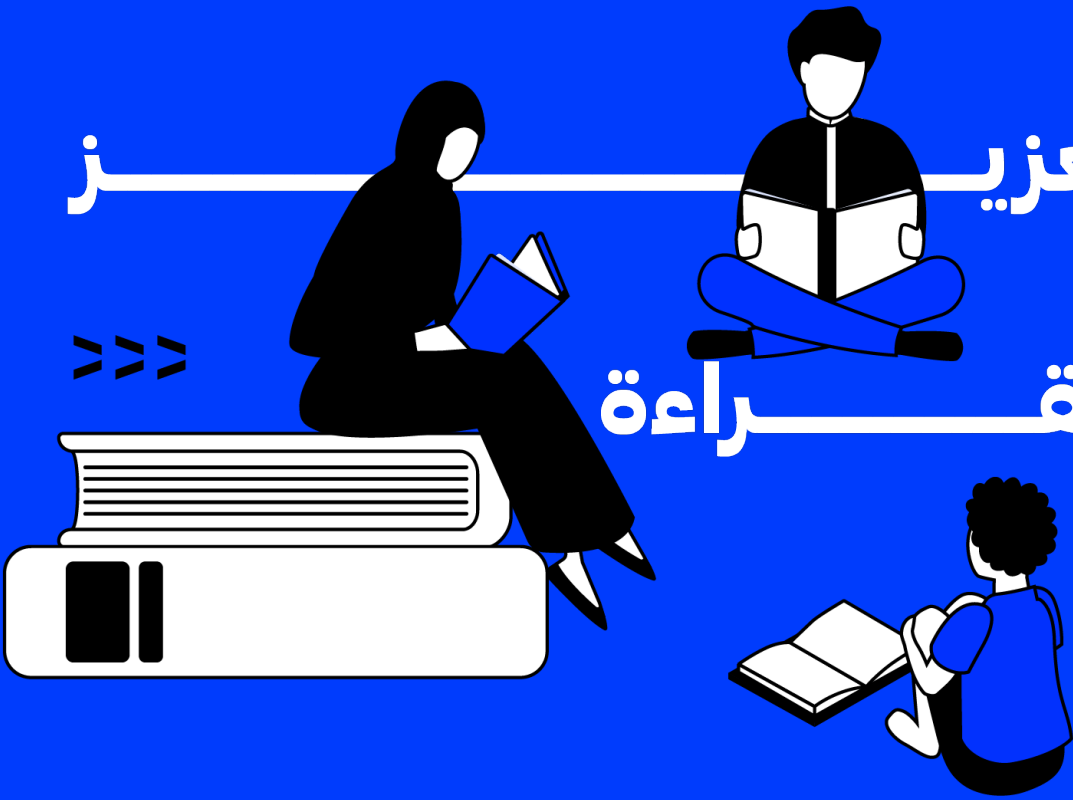
- Remember that children's reading interest and imagination may be caught by specific topics or books. Encourage them to engage with those as they'll naturally develop a love of reading through them. Do not show disapproval if your child wants to re-read their favorites.
- Many websites, such as [Love Reading for Kids](#), have recommended reading lists by age and topic. You can look through these lists to find ideas about good books to introduce to your child.
- Alternatively, ask your child's teacher or school librarian for advice and recommendations.
- Another way of selecting books at your child's reading proficiency is through using "leveled books". A levelled book simply means a book that has been evaluated by experts and declared to be appropriate for a specific age group or reading ability. Many websites, such as [Reading A-Z](#), [Love Reading](#), [Scholastic](#), [Oxford OWL](#), [Cengage](#) etc., provide suggestions for books based on reading levels, age or grade level.
- For older children, typically, you would expect a child to read a book with 90-95% accuracy if they want to read it independently.
  - Use the "Rule of Five" with older children. Ask them to read the first couple of pages of a book, and for every word they are unable to read, they should put a finger up. If they get to five fingers by the end of the first or second page, the book may be too difficult for them to read independently. You can support them by reading aloud with them or helping them read difficult words.

Source: Pearson

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**SUPPORTING READING FOR  
CHILDREN AT DIFFERENT AGES**

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## How Do Children Learn to Read?

- Children develop **oral language** before they learn to read: Before they begin to understand and interpret words or text on paper, children already understand thousands of spoken words, and also speak several words. Oral language (speaking and listening) helps set the stage for future reading.
- Before children formally begin reading, they often **“pretend”** to read. This means that they can recognize signs and stories previously read to them on a page and can therefore point them out and exhibit an understanding of the content.
- As they grow up, children build on their existing oral language skills by learning about **the relationship between letters and sounds**. At this stage, they typically begin using this knowledge of letter sounds to read simple words and make sense of what they read. This is not a naturally acquired skill, and generally happens through direct instruction of **phonics**<sup>1</sup> at school or any other learning setting.
- Next, children **begin to read easy, familiar texts through decoding**, i.e., using their knowledge of phonics to enunciate words, and through contextual clues in the text, and by recognizing words that occur frequently in the text but may not be read through decoding.
- With sustained practice and reading opportunities, young readers achieve **fluency**, i.e., the ability to read with speed, accuracy and appropriate expression.
- As children move to more complex texts and books, **vocabulary** is an essential component of their ability to read. Knowing words and their meaning allows children to quickly recognize words in context and comprehend texts.
- Finally, **comprehension** involves constructing meaning that is reasonable and accurate by connecting what has been read to what the reader already knows. Comprehension occurs at all ages for children: Even the youngest “readers” comprehend by looking at images in a book or contextual cues in their environment.
- While these skills build upon each other, they are not exclusive for different ages or stages. For example: Fluent readers also decode complex words using their knowledge of phonics, and emergent readers also comprehend and build their vocabulary even if they are not “reading” words.

1: For a brief explanation of Phonics, see page 25  
Source: [Chall's Stages of Reading Development](#)

## Supporting Reading

**For Babies (0 - 18 Months)** >>>>>>●>>>>>>>

## THINGS TO KNOW

Oral language is the building block for reading. The first steps in helping your child become a happy and confident reader are to help develop their language in the early stages of their life.

Babies begin learning language by hearing your voice and your response to their sounds, smiles and expressions.

### TYPICALLY, YOUR CHILD AT THIS STAGE WILL...

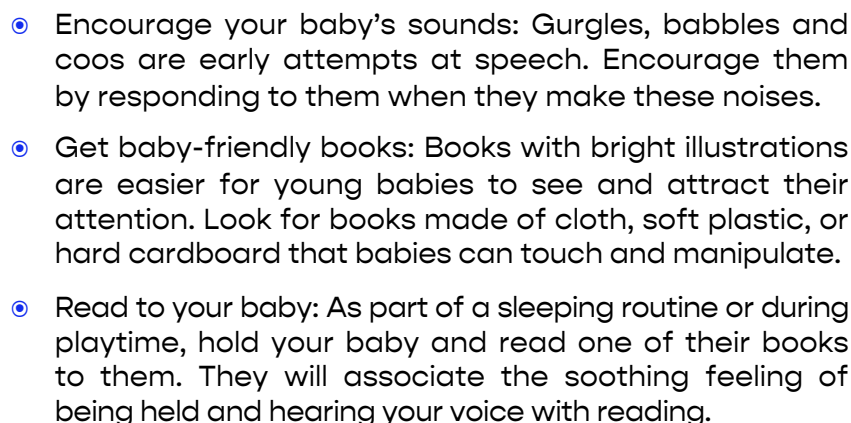
- Use his/her voice to express themselves. For example: Laughing, crying.
- Imitate speech by making simple sounds.
- Look at books.
- Begin saying some simple or self-made words.
- Understand several simple phrases.
- Beyond one year, can say one or more words.
- Enjoy looking at books and other printed material with familiar people.
- Handle books with interest and manipulate them.

## HOW YOU CAN SUPPORT

- Talk to your baby: Repeat nursery rhymes, sing songs, describe things to them as you go about your day. This includes **Self-talk** - narrating your own actions as you do them-, for example, Mommy's brushing your hair, brush, brush, brush and **parallel-talk** -narrating what your child is doing-, for example, Oh, you have a truck! A yellow truck! Let's make it go! Vroom!.

Note: Children develop at their own rates, and in their own ways. The development statements in this guide are only indicative.

Source: [Raising Strong Readers, Harvard Usable Knowledge](#)



## THINGS TO KNOW

- Say common rhymes (bat-cat-sat), imitate the tone and sounds of adults speaking.
- Enjoy listening to predictable, familiar books and join in when it is time to say a simple word or phrase that gets repeated in the story.
- Have some favorite stories, songs or rhymes.

Source: [Raising Strong Readers, Harvard Usable Knowledge](#)

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Source: [Raising Strong Readers, Harvard Usable Knowledge](#)

## THINGS TO KNOW

Becoming familiar with more words at a young age helps children become readers for life. At this stage, reading is also an important tool to introduce them to features of print and writing. This helps prepare them for writing at school.

## TYPICALLY, YOUR CHILD AT THIS STAGE WILL...

- Identify words that rhyme or have the same beginning sound.
- Hold a book the right side up, turn pages, and understand the direction in which to read (depending on the script/language).
- Show interest in illustrations and print in both books and his/her environment.
- Look at books independently.
- Make predictions about a story based on their knowledge or scanning the images.



## HOW YOU CAN SUPPORT

- Point out print everywhere: Point out words and signs they see around them. Ask your child to identify familiar letters, numbers or words that they see on a billboard, or a menu.
- Talk about writing as you read: Point out how words in their books are separated by spaces, and how we read from left to right (English) and right to left (Arabic) and top to bottom.
- Give everything a name: Build your child's vocabulary by teaching them interesting words. For example: "Look at the train. See the place where the smoke is coming out of? It's called a chimney. Have you seen chimneys anywhere else?"

Note: Children develop at their own rates, and in their own ways. The development statements in this guide are only indicative.

Source: [Raising Strong Readers, Harvard Usable Knowledge](#)





## THINGS TO KNOW

The words we use in conversation are different from the words that children are exposed to in academic texts. To succeed in reading at school, children need exposure to this academic language.

## TYPICALLY, YOUR CHILD AT THIS STAGE WILL...

- Develop into an increasingly fluent and independent reader. While the focus at this stage is comprehension, your child may still use their phonics skills to tackle new words.
- Use his/her knowledge of root words, prefixes and suffixes to work out the meaning of words.
- Make inferences (“read between the lines”) by using clues from the text and prior knowledge.
- Comprehend a variety of age-appropriate texts and discuss their opinions and thoughts about the content with others.

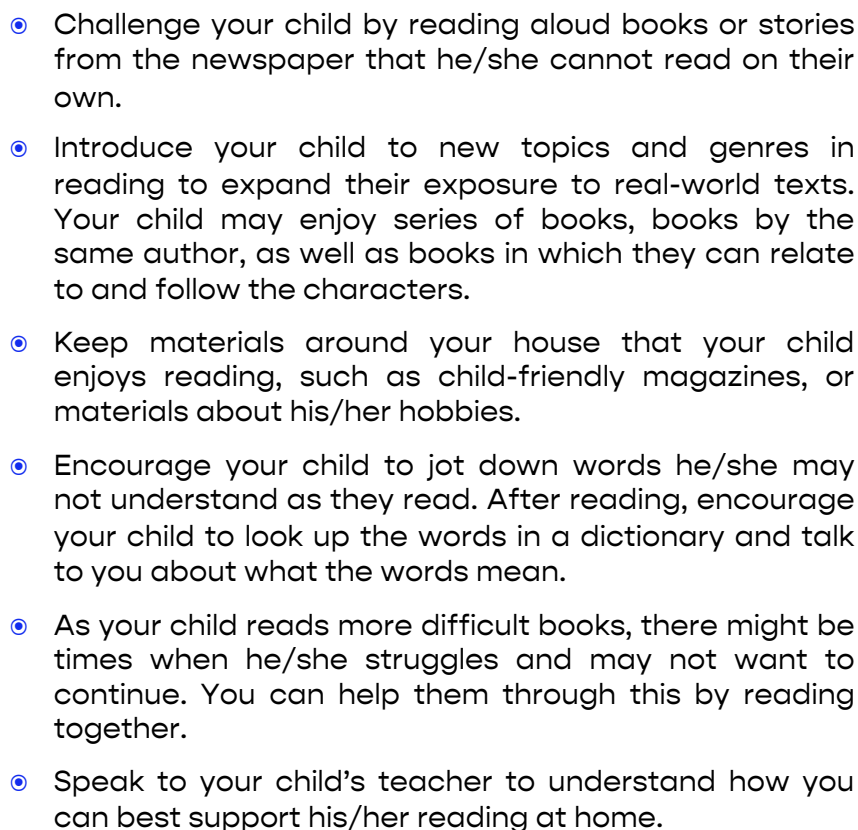


## HOW YOU CAN SUPPORT

- Listen to your child reading: At this age, your child may start to prefer reading independently. To give them confidence and support their reading ability, you can take the role of a listener, and help your child with unfamiliar words, as well as talk about the book to help with comprehension.
- Hang maps, word-filled posters, or other schoolwork he/she has completed around the house to expose him/her to more words and to show that you value their effort.

Note: Children develop at their own rates, and in their own ways. The development statements in this guide are only indicative.

Sources: [Raising Strong Readers](#), [Harvard Usable Knowledge](#), [Oxford Owl](#)



## THINGS TO KNOW

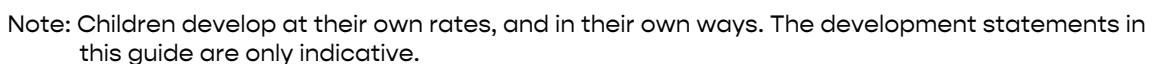
Vocabulary growth is critical to preparing children for the complex reading level of high-school textbooks.

Note: Children develop at their own rates, and in their own ways. The development statements in this guide are only indicative.

[illegible]

- Keep expanding their vocabulary and read more complex texts.
- Determine themes of text and compare points of views and ideas from different books on the same topic.
- Discuss how new information builds on his/her current knowledge.
- Use evidence from the text to support analysis.
- Analyze, synthesize, and evaluate ideas from the text.

- Talk to your child about what is in the news, or what is happening at school or your workplace.
- If your teen is a less engaged reader, your goal should be to prevent him/her from shutting down about reading altogether. Do not criticize his/her book choices, especially if they do not align with your own. Allow your child to read what he/she likes: magazines, comic books, blogs, books about games or TV series, etc.
- Connect reading to your teen's passion: For example, If your child wants to work with animals, show them how important reading will be to study veterinary science, or expose them to increasingly complex materials related to the topic.
- Provide reading opportunities not limited to school: As school reading becomes linked to exam pressures, teens can begin to see reading as less fun than it used to be. Encourage your child to read materials unrelated to school to support the joy of reading.
- Set an example: Let your child see you reading for pleasure.



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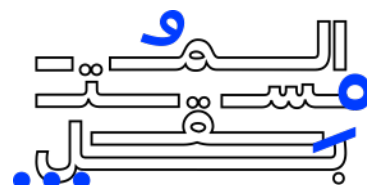
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**SUPPORTING CHILDREN WHO  
STRUGGLE WITH READING**

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# Supporting Children Who Struggle with Reading

- Remember that children develop at different rates, and if your child finds reading challenging, it is not necessarily an indication of special needs.
- From time to time, your child may find reading difficult. While this productive struggle is a sign of effort, reading shouldn't cause anxiety. Support and encouragement from home and school goes a long way in helping children overcome anxiety about reading.
- Children may find reading difficult for a range of reasons. However, if your child experiences persistent reading difficulties, you may consider the following possibilities:
  - Difficulties with reading can occur in children who begin talking later than their peers or who have difficulty pronouncing certain words or sounds.
  - A sensory impairment may be presenting an issue, and therefore getting your child's hearing and vision checked might be worthwhile.
  - Children with difficulty maintaining attention and concentration can find reading difficult.
- Some areas to look out for when your child is reading are:
  - Difficulty spotting rhyming patterns.
  - Missing words out in a sentence.
  - Difficulty in learning the alphabet, recognizing letters or numbers.
  - Maintaining concentration.
  - Forgetting what they've read.
  - Difficulty following verbal instructions.
- If you feel your child is struggling to read and this is causing increased anxiety, it is worth raising your concerns with your child's teacher. Professionals in your child's school may also provide advice and interventions to support your child.



If your child already has a diagnosis of an additional need that may challenge their reading ability, it may be worthwhile considering what accommodations you can make to support him/her. These include:

- Changing the font size and font style of the text or providing a colored overlay as described [here](#).
- Reading with your child, reading at their pace and supporting their acquisition of new vocabulary.
- Using a reading ruler or guide to help your child maintain their place in the text.
- Using read aloud software.
- Reading for shorter intervals with greater frequency.
- Providing a reading environment that is comfortable for your child, with reduced distractions or background noise.
- Choosing books with plenty of visuals/pictures that support your child’s comprehension and can be used to explore his/her understanding.
- Looking for ‘high/low’ books – high interest content with lower level of challenge. These will engage readers who struggle to read at an age-appropriate level. Some examples of high/low books can be found [here](#).





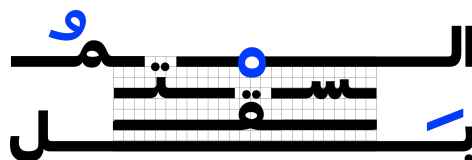
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**STRATEGIES FOR SUPPORTING  
EMERGING READERS**

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## How to Read to, or With Your Emerging Reader

- Depending on the purpose and the complexity of the book, there are different ways in which you can read to, or with your child, such as:
  - Reading aloud, usually used for younger children, or when reading a book that is significantly above your child’s reading level. In a read-aloud, the parent/caregiver usually reads all or most of the text, and models skilled reading behavior and enjoyment, while the child listens and observes.
  - Shared reading, when the parent/caregiver introduces the text and reads aloud once. As the child becomes more familiar with the text, they assume more control, particularly at repetitive sections or when rhyme and rhythm are present.
  - Guided reading, where the child takes the lead in reading the text while the parent/caregiver listens and helps as needed. This is often used when the child can comfortably read a large portion of the text independently.
- The best way to read is to read interactively, by asking questions and discussing the book so that children can comprehend the text and develop a deeper connection to it.
- Irrespective of how you read to your child, here are some things you can do before, during, and after reading to help their comprehension:
  - **Before:** Your goal is to help your child understand the purpose of what he/she is about to read. Look at the book’s cover: Ask questions such as: “Where/What is the title of the book?”, “Who is the author?”, “Do you know any other books that were written by this author?” “What do you think this book might be about? Why? Can you make some predictions?” Guide your child through the pages, discuss the pictures, and brainstorm what might happen in the story. Talk about any personal experiences your child may have that relate to the story.



Sources: Learning at the Primary Pond, Reading Rockets, Victoria State Government

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# A Simple Introduction to Phonics

We encourage you to reach out to your child's school to learn more about their phonics program and how you can best support your child.

However, below is a quick and simplified introduction to phonics for parents. This introduction is not comprehensive, and we encourage you to seek advice from your child's teacher to learn how to best support his/her reading.

In simple terms, with phonics, children are taught to read by:

1. Recognizing that individual letters or combination of letters represent sounds. For example: ‘t’ represents the sound /t/ as in ten and the letter combination ‘ch’ represents the sound /ch/ as in chair, and then learning these sounds.
2. “Blending” the sounds of individual letters or letter combinations together to “sound out” words. For example: Reading simple words such as tip, sat, pin by blending the individual letter sounds together to make the whole word.
3. Breaking down or “segmenting” words into their individual letters or letter combinations, such as recognizing that the word cat has three sounds: /c/, /a/ and /t/.
4. Using blending and segmenting skills to identify and replace beginning and ending sounds in simple words.
5. Reading words that do not follow the phonics “rules”, such as once, was, have, the, my, are, etc. These are usually called “tricky words”, but you may also hear teachers refer to them as “sight” words or “high-frequency words”. Over time, children will be able to recognize these words straight away as they read.
6. Visit [this](#) link for a basic introduction to phonics.



Sources: [Phonics Hero](#), [Pearson](#)

# The Parent List of Do's and Don'ts for Phonics



## Do's



Do your research: Find out which phonics system your child is learning at school. Depending on the system used in your child's school, they may learn sounds such as /s/, /a/, /t/, /p/, /i/, /n/ in a non-alphabetical order.

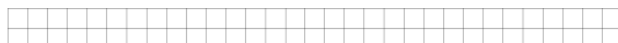
Learn to say the sounds correctly: Watch [this video](#) and learn to say the correct sound for each letter or groups of letters. This way, you can reinforce your child's phonics knowledge.

Practice: Give your child multiple opportunities to practice. You can do this through flashcards, playing games where they can look at words and sound out the letters that they see around them. [This video](#) introduces you to basic techniques for blending. For more ideas, see the resources page at the end of this guide.

Remember to keep activities light and fun. Children in their early years learn best through play, not through drills. See some activities [here](#) for ideas about how to embed phonics-based learning in play.

Pause to allow your child time for reading a word. If they're stuck, help by providing them a clue. For example: "What is the first sound?" rather than reading the complete word.

Source: [Pearson](#)



# Dont's



Do not teach children phonics too early on your own. Let their teacher introduce them to phonics at the appropriate time. Instead, please refer to the previous section to learn how you can help your child's reading development at every age.

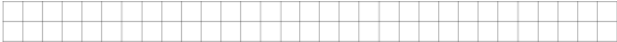
When your child is introduced to letter sounds initially, do not say the letter names. This may confuse them and hinder their sounding out/blending skills. For example, when they see 'd', utter the sound /d/ and not /deee/. At a later stage, their teacher will introduce them to the names of the letter as well.

Do not add an /uh/ sound to consonants when saying them out loud. For example, the sound for t is /t/, not /tuh/.

Do not expect young children to be able to read word for word. Sometimes, they will "pretend-read" or tell a story as they read. Allow this, and gradually use the strategies in the previous section to help them read.



Source: [Pearson](#)



## Helpful Resources

- [This](#) article by Edutopia on play-based activities that strengthen your child's reading readiness.
- [This](#) website for parents by Reading Rockets that introduces you to key concepts in reading and gives a range of further tips and tricks.
- [This](#) article with some suggested educational apps to support your child's reading.
- [This](#) article on teaching your child phonics.
- [This](#) website that has a catalogue of 2500+ books organized by reading levels.
- [Parent Guide](#) to the Song of Sounds method for phonics and [this guide](#) to the Jolly Phonics method.
- Reading Rocket's resource page for [struggling readers](#).
- Resources for children and families on the following websites:
  - [Reading partners](#)
  - [Reading is fundamental](#)
  - [Read Write Think](#)
  - [RAZ Kids](#)
  - [Starfall](#)
- Books and resources in Arabic and other languages:
  - [100 Books in Arabic](#) by IBBY Europe
  - A wide collection of books in 53 languages at [Little Linguist](#)
  - [International Children's Library](#) book collection
  - [Visual storybooks](#) in Arabic in the Abu Dhabi Children's Library
- Arabic-specific literacy resources at:
  - [I Read Arabic](#)
  - [Nahla Wa Nahil](#)
  - [Alef Ba Ta](#)
- Visit the Abu Dhabi Children's Library:
  - See the online collection [here](#)
  - Or [Plan a Visit](#)

