

5 reasons why children struggle to learn to read



HELP!



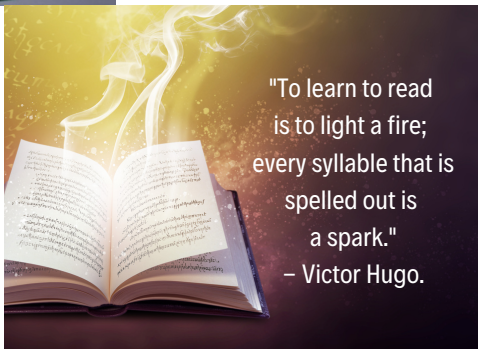


"If a child could do well
they would do well"

Dr Ross Greene

Learning to read should be easy. There is a reason your child is struggling.

When you identify what is holding your child back from reading you can help them open the doorway to a million worlds through books. There are many keys to crack the code.



"To learn to read
is to light a fire;
every syllable that is
spelled out is
a spark."

– Victor Hugo.

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Letters - the building blocks

Have you ever picked up a book in Russian or your subtitles are stuck in Chinese and because you don't know the characters or letters you're not able to read the words? It seems so vital but plenty of children are struggling to learn to read because they only know a handful of letters. Imagine only knowing 5 or 6 letters in Grade 4. It's no wonder the child isn't reading. It's just a guessing game.

THE NAME NOT THE SOUND

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- I once had a child spell his name by saying the sound /s/ /h/ /a/ /w/ /n/ because he was taught letters as sounds.
- We're not helping kids when we say the sound instead of the letter name. When we teach letters as sounds we're teaching it as an absolute eg A = /a/ or C = /k/.
- The letter A can say at least 14 sounds.

FOCUS ON LOWER CASE

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- Commercial materials for children often display the upper case letters however to read they need to know the lower case letters the most.
- If you teach children the lower case letters then you only need to explicitly teach maybe 3 upper case letters.
- If you teach the upper case letters first you need to teach nearly all the lower case.

NOT IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER

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- It's so tempting to teach letters in alphabetical order because that is just the way we think of letters.
- Think about the letters a b c d – they all look similar and the b c d sound similar as they all end with the ee sound. Try letters that look and sound different eg x o i n.
- You can teach one letter at a time maybe even 2 but not all 26 letters at once.

"Respect the building blocks, master the fundamentals, and the potential is unlimited."

- PJ Ladd



Blending - the secret skill

Ever heard your child saying the sounds of the word over and over again /k/ /a/ /t/ but they can't put the word together. You come up and say the sounds and they instantly can get the word. Maybe they are saying /s/ /p/ /o/ /r/ and say sort or port. This is still a blending problem just higher up the developmental sequences. Blending is the underlying phonological awareness skill children need to be able to blend the sounds to make the word. It gives children the word attack skills they need to be able to read any word.

FIRST STEP – AFTER YOU

- No need for written words when first learning this skill.
- You say the sounds and your child puts them together to tell you the word.
- Yes, when you first start they look at you like you have three heads.
- Remember there is a developmental sequence. Try some words with only two sounds first eg bee, cow, shoe, chair, may, out, off, art. Then if they are getting success try some words with three sounds eg couch, sheep, mouse, church.

THE MAGIC – BLENDING ON THEIR OWN

- They say the sounds and then say the word. Remember not to say the sounds for them or they are just blending after you.
- Our unique way of teaching this skill with sound cards means that we can build this skill even if they don't yet know all their letters and no phonic knowledge is required.
- Again start with easier two sound words eg bee, cow, shoe, chair, may, out, off, art. Then if they are getting success try some words with three sounds eg couch, sheep, mouse, church.

BLENDING NEEDS TO BE STRONG

- This skill needs to be super strong so children can have the word attack skills to read words that are not yet part of their vocabulary so try some nonsense words (not real words) eg sher, loy, nair.

"Today a reader,
tomorrow a leader."
- Margaret Fuller



The Phonics - the true code

English has one of the hardest phonic systems with 44 sounds and only 26 letters. Wouldn't it be nice if there was only one pattern for each sound!

IT ISN'T WHAT WE LEARNT

- Did you get taught the sounds of letters
A says /a/, B says /b/ or even the songs
ants on the apples a a a.
- Did you miss out on phonics with the
whole word era.
- English has a complex relationship
between letters and sounds.
- One to one letters as sounds teaching
means that children are attempting to
read house as /h/ /o/ /u/ /s/ /e/. It
doesn't work.

WHERE IT GETS DIFFICULT

- It's not an easy 1:1 relationship with
letters and sounds.

	Letters 26	Sounds 44
Vowels	5/6	20
Consonants	21	24

- Children find the letter-sound
relationships with vowels the most
difficult and even as adults we can
struggle. Most prep children can tell
you what the consonant letters and
sounds are.

AUSTRALIAN ACCENT

- Have you ever watched an American talk
show and had to work out the word
they're saying? When Martha Stewart
said "scallops" it took me a while to
figure out what she was saying.
- Our accent is not the same as the
British or American way to say vowels
yet we continue to teach with programs
written for their vowel sounds.
- Use a program written for our vowel
sounds.

**"Once you learn to
read, you will be
forever free."
- Frederick Douglass**



Uh oh here comes - the long words

Hippopotomonstrosesquippedaliophobia is a real word and it means the fear of long words. Your child is reading and they keep glancing at the long word that is looming up on the page. They start to stumble on words they can easily read and lose their place in the text. Long words can be overwhelming for children if they haven't been taught how to read them. They are crucial for comprehension as big words carry the meaning.

SOUNDING OUT VS SYLLABLES

- Children who attempt to work out long words by saying all the sounds will not be able to hold the sounds in their head and blend them together.
- They will miss whole syllables and sounds.

GUESSING BY FIRST LETTER / SYLLABLE

- Some children resort to guessing the big words by the first letter – concrete for cemetery.
- Others guess by the first syllable eg finishing for fingerprint.
- Both of these strategies impact on children's comprehension of the text.

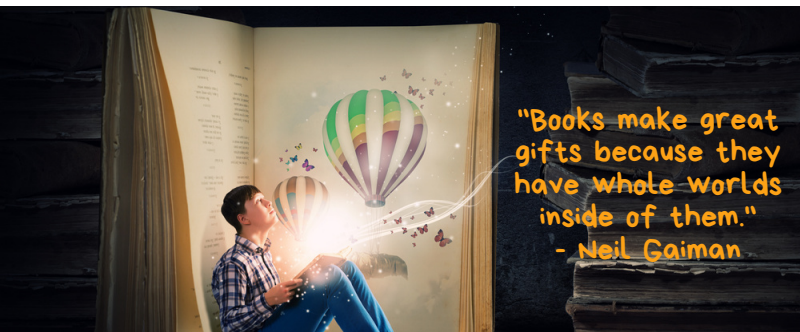
GUESSING BY CONTEXT

- Children with good language skills and world knowledge may be guessing the long words by the context.
- When they guess the word incorrectly they lose the meaning of the story.
- When the words aren't in context they are unable to attack them.



"Hippopotomonstrosesquippedaliophobia"
is the fear of
Long words

Comprehension - getting the movie



The whole point of reading is to make meaning. Children need to be able to comprehend what they read.

DECODING IS EFFORTFUL

- If reading is painful and slow due to effortful decoding children lose meaning because their brain power is going into the decoding not the meaning maker.
- Decoding needs to be easy and effortless for the brain to have the space and ability to focus on the story.

READING WORD BY WORD

- Some children read word by word without linking phrases together, pausing at the commas and breathing at the full stop.
- They aren't creating sentences when they read.
- They aren't building meaning at the phrase and sentence level so they are unable to comprehend the story.

READS FLUENTLY BUT DOESN'T SEE STORY

- Some children read fluently sometimes without expression. They can read a whole page, chapter or book and not be able to answer any questions.
- Often they have an underlying language issue.
- Some children have specific difficulties with creating pictures like a movie in their head
- They can struggle to understand even if you read the story out loud.

Stamina - lasting the marathon



"Keep reading. It's one of the most marvelous adventures that anyone can have."
- Lloyd Alexander.

Children need to develop reading stamina. Some children with limited stamina can only read one to two pages and it's not that they don't want to read but that is all their brain can manage. Children in Year 1 are now reading chapter books so reading stamina needs to be strong.

THE RIGHT BOOK AT THE RIGHT LEVEL

- Pick books with the child's interests in mind – nothing like a school reader on tug boats to take the passion and heart out of literacy (unless they like tug boats).
- If the books are too hard then the child will start skipping words, pages or start hiding the books

TIME OF DAY, ENVIRONMENT

- Read at the right time of day. Children need to be alert, feeling happy, full of food, hydrated and regulated to give their brains the right conditions to read.
- Distractions like noise, tv, people talking and other children and dogs running around makes it hard to focus. Find a comfy spot and let the dog or cat cuddle on their lap while they read them a story.

IT'S A MUSCLE – TRAIN REGULARLY

- Just the right amount to read and daily practice beats having children read entire books and chapters on the weekend to make up for not reading during the week.
- Work at building up the amount and time they read.
- Encourage them to read aloud so you know when the fluency starts to break down and it's time to have a break.

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CHILD'S LITERACY
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about your child's
reading?

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sounds
to
letters

