

Reading: Prepare, Pause, Prompt, Praise, Probe, Practise

Prepare

1. Take a quick look at the book your child has selected before beginning. This will give you a chance to think of ways to assist your child, if necessary.
2. Choose a time in the day or evening when neither of you will be distracted.
3. Find a comfortable and well-lit spot to sit together.
4. Talk to your child about the book before you begin. Look at the title and cover and talk about what you might expect to find in the book. This is the best time to introduce any new words that the child may come across in the book.
5. If the child has selected a book that is too difficult, read it to him or her, or take turns at reading short passages.

Pause

Often the best way to help your child is by not `helping` or intervening – straight away. Suggestions or prompts which we hastily offer can interrupt the child's line of thought and can lead to confusion.

When the child comes to a word that he or she does not know, *pause* and count silently to 10, allowing the child time to work it out unaided.

In the meantime, you should be thinking about ways you can help. At the end of the pause ask, `Would you like me to help you?`

Prompt

The prompt is a hint to assist the child to `have a go`. There are three situations where prompts can be used.

1. *Incorrect word used, but meaning is unchanged*

For example, if the text says, `The little dog played with the big red ball`, the child reads, `The little puppy played with the big red ball.`

You can help by directing the child's attention back to the sentence where the substitution was made and repeat what the child said. Ask, `Does that look right? At this point the child will probably self-correct. If so, offer praise and continue. If not, draw his or her attention to the print by saying, for example, "Puppy" begins with a "p". What letter is at the beginning of the word in the book?`

2. *Incorrect word used and meaning is altered or lost*

For example, if the text says, `The little dog played with the big red ball`, the child reads, `The little day played with the big red ball.`

You can help by repeating what the child read, stressing the incorrect word, and ask, 'Does that sound right?' or 'Does that make sense?'

3. *The child does not say anything*

Some prompts could help:

- Read aloud to the end of the sentence;
- re-read the sentence or passage;
- refer to the pictures;
- discuss experiences you have had that are related to the story;
- sound out a 'problem word' or break it up into smaller parts;
- tell the child the word if, after two attempts, he or she has not been able to work it out.

Praise

Learning to read is a difficult task fraught with pitfalls and inconsistent rules. The child who feels good about himself will be in an ideal position to take on these challenges.

Help your child to see that he or she is making progress by acknowledging his or her growing skills. Be specific in the praise that you give (e.g. 'I could hear that you were sounding the word out. Well done, Andrew!').

Maintain this genuine interest in your child's work as he or she moves through school by reading and discussing the books he or she is studying.

Probe

Recognising the words is only one small part of reading. The other is being able to understand, interpret and use the material that you have read.

Try probing to encourage deeper understanding by re-visiting the material in new ways. Perhaps you could encourage your child to try the following:

- retell the story in his or her own words;
- draw a character or scene from the book;
- write to a friend recommending the book;
- make or bake something mentioned in the book.

As comprehension skills develop, nudge your child's understanding beyond the purely literal level through activities such as:

- discussing what messages you think the author was trying to send;
- considering what you might have done in the same situation;

sharing how you felt at different times throughout the story.

Practise

Regular reading is habit-forming. Try to establish a pattern where you and your child read a little each day. While the reading may be for work or pleasure, try to view it as a normal part of your routine. Children are more open to learning if they can see that it has a useful application in their lives.

Taken from *Miles Franklin Primary School* newsletter.