

# What is Paired Reading?

Paired Reading is a technique that parents can use to help their own child with reading practice. The method involves the parent who is a skilled reader and the child who is learning, reading a book together.

## Who is it for?

Every child will benefit from using Paired Reading. It is not just for children with learning difficulties.

## What are the benefits?

Parents who have undertaken Paired Reading report that not only does the child's reading improve but that child's self-esteem has improved, and generally the child is more co-operative at home also. This can be attributed to the quality parent - child relationship that develops as they spend more time together.

## When should it be done?

Choose a suitable time when the parent and child are going to be in a good frame of mind. Avoid any time when the child is likely to be tired, hungry or irritable. Agree on a given time, five to seven times a week and stick with that schedule.

## How do we choose the books?

The child's class teacher may be able to offer suggestions about suitable books to read. Seek the advice of your librarian when you visit the local library. Allow the child to choose the book if possible.

If you have to choose the book yourself, make sure the vocabulary is suitable, and that the print is clear. Books with pictures are generally best. Don't worry if the child uses the pictures to predict the text. The important thing is that the child is getting practice at reading and that reading is becoming more enjoyable.

Think about a child learning to ride a bike. In the early stages you give the child encouragement, confidence and control, by holding the bicycle. Your own instinct will tell you when to let go. So you can gradually disengage for longer periods until your child is able to ride without help. The same applies to Paired Reading. It is an ideal way of helping your child to become an independent reader.

# Working to a plan

## Reading Together

Your child selects a book. It must also be suitable to his/her reading level.

- Discuss the book:
  - What is the title of the book?
  - What does the cover picture tell you?
  - Why did you pick this book?
  - What do you think will happen in the story?
- Invite the child to read along with you.
- You both read together. Pace your reading to the speed of the child.
- If your child fails at a word, or struggles at a word for longer than 4 seconds, pronounce the word clearly for him/her. Then continue reading as before.
- Ask questions occasionally e.g. at the end of a page: What do you think will happen next?
- Make observations about the story: "That's terrible! He must feel very sad".

- Praise the child frequently for his/her effort.
- A period of 5-7 minutes is recommended for reading together. Always stop at a natural break in the story, if the book is too long to read at one sitting.

## Letting Go:

After a period of reading together, you are ready to gradually "Let Go"

- Gradually lower your voice during paired reading.
- Let the child's voice dominate.
- Begin to drop out from reading aloud.
- Rejoin if your child gets a word wrong or begins to struggle. Continue reading with the child until you feel she/he is ready to continue on her/his own.

## Things to avoid:

- Turn off the television, radio etc. - they are obvious distractions.
- Avoid other family members interrupting you while Paired Reading is taking place..
- Avoid negative comments. Do not make comments like "Look at what you are doing" or "Concentrate, you knew that word last week"
- Don't continue with a session if the child is obviously very tired.
- Now that your child is reading himself/herself don't stop reading to him/her at other times. The more times you read to your child will increase his/her enjoyment of books.

## References:

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