



**Rising Stars**  
**Reading Planet**

# Guide to Reading with your Child

Ways to help your child get the  
most from reading at home

- ★ Making sense of phonics
- ★ Book banding explained
- ★ Ideas for developing understanding

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# Rising Stars Reading Planet

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# WELCOME TO *READING PLANET*!

This guide has found its way to you because your child has started reading books from the *Reading Planet* series. You may already have experience of supporting children to read, but this guide will give you some helpful tips, ideas, and answer some of the questions you might have as you travel with your child along their reading journey.

*Reading Planet* is an exciting reading scheme, created by a team of experts, which will help your child develop reading skills and build a lifelong love of reading. The series is based on the latest research on how children read, specifically something called ‘speech rhythm sensitivity’, which can be taught using simple activities. It may sound like a strange term, but building and understanding children’s sensitivity to speech and language is really important when learning to read.



## ***Reading Planet* is made up of four strands ...**



### **Lift-off**

– wordless books to ensure all children develop essential early language skills.



### **Rocket Phonics**

– exciting books that help children practise phonics skills in context.



– adventure stories following the lives of Rav, Asha, Tess and Finn, four friends from Comet Street.



### **Galaxy**

– inspiring fiction, non-fiction, poetry and biographies to capture the interest of every child.

# WHY IS READING SO IMPORTANT?

Here are five reasons why helping your child learn to read is important:

## **1 Reading helps build communication skills**

Learning to read can have a positive impact on your child's ability to communicate and interact with others, as well as improving speaking, listening and writing skills.

## **2 Reading opens the imagination**

Reading is a way of unlocking a world of creativity and imagination. New worlds and new experiences are pleasures achieved when you can read.

## **3 Reading has a positive impact on progress at school**

Reading is an important step in your child's education because it unlocks the ability to understand information in other subjects, meaning deeper understanding and faster progression.

"PISA results (OECD, 2011) show that 15-year-olds who read for enjoyment daily are one and a half years of schooling ahead of those who do not read daily."

*Reading for Enjoyment: A literature review* (2016, National Literacy Trust)

## **4 Reading can improve mental health and well-being**

Frequent reading for pleasure can help to increase your child's well-being. Your child's favourite book characters can often be role models and may help your child empathise with others. By reading, children can learn about problems other children face and how to deal with issues.

## **5 Reading is a fundamental life skill**

In our society, we rely on being able to read to perform everyday tasks independently. Many practical tasks would be very challenging without the ability to read, so reading skills are important to learn at an early age.

# UNDERSTANDING CURRICULUM EXPECTATIONS

Reading to open the imagination is one thing, but what does your child need to be able to do according to the demands of the curriculum? Here is an overview of the skills the teacher will be helping your child to build and the goals they will be working towards to meet the expectations of the national curriculum for England.

## What is expected of your child in Reception?

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) curriculum contains a specific reading goal as follows:

“Children read and understand simple sentences. They use phonic knowledge to decode regular words and read them aloud accurately. They also read some common irregular words. They demonstrate understanding when talking with others about what they have read.”

Other aspects of reading that might be seen or taught within Reception may include:

- ★ hearing and saying the initial sound in words
- ★ segmenting the sounds in simple words and blending them together
- ★ beginning to read words and simple sentences
- ★ using vocabulary and forms of speech that are increasingly influenced by experience of books
- ★ enjoying an increasing range of books
- ★ knowing that information can be retrieved from books and computers.

# What is expected of your child at Key Stage 1?

The national curriculum for reading at Key Stages 1 and 2 (KS1 and KS2) focuses on two areas:

**word reading** – both the working out of the pronunciation of unfamiliar printed words (decoding) and the recognition of familiar printed words

**comprehension** – reading widely across both fiction and non-fiction to help children develop knowledge and understanding of themselves and the world in which they live, to establish an appreciation and love of reading, and to gain knowledge across the curriculum.

The aim is that all children:

- ★ read easily, fluently and with good understanding
- ★ develop the habit of reading widely and often, for both pleasure and information
- ★ acquire a wide vocabulary, an understanding of grammar and a knowledge of linguistic conventions for reading, writing and spoken language
- ★ appreciate our rich and varied literary heritage.

## How and when will your child be tested?

### Phonics screening check

At the end of Year 1, your child will have a phonics screening check. This is designed to assess whether your child has learned to decode (read) words, but not to test understanding of the meanings of the words. Children will need to read a list of 40 words aloud to the teacher. Twenty will be real words, the rest pseudo-words (artificial words) to ensure that children use their phonics skills instead of their memory when reading.

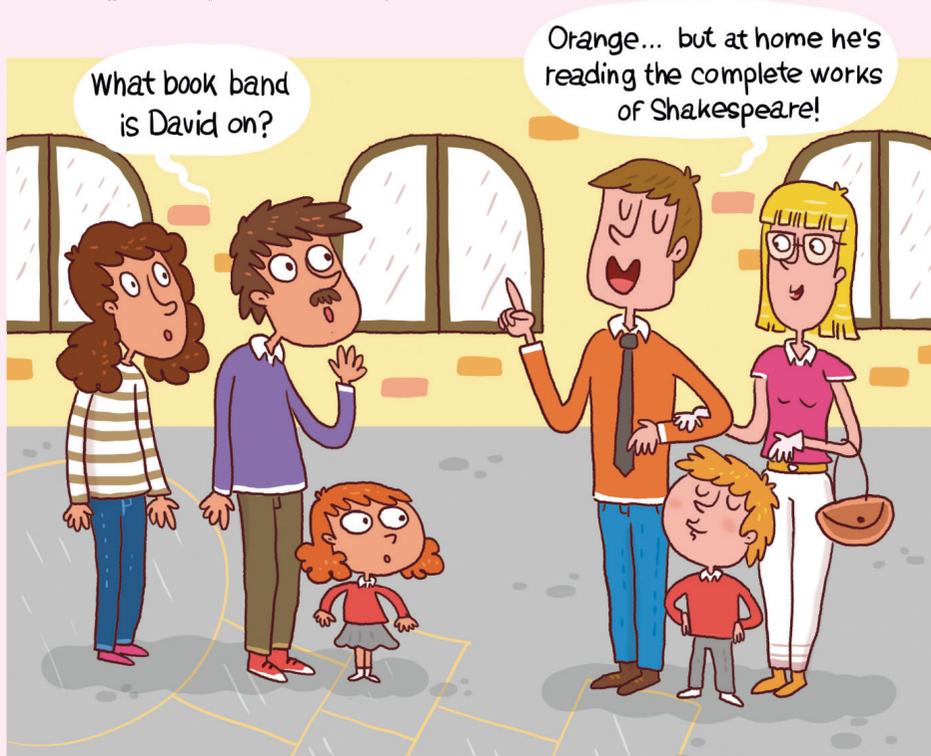
### National Tests

In Year 2, at the end of KS1, National Tests take place during the first full teaching week of May each year, spread across a few days. The reading test has one paper, lasting for one hour. Your child will be asked to answer questions about three different texts (often one fiction, one non-fiction and one poem). Some questions will be answered by ticking boxes, and others will require more detailed written answers. The questions will focus on knowledge of vocabulary and comprehension, including making inferences from the text.

# WHAT ARE BOOK BANDS?

Many reading schemes use coloured book bands to indicate the level of their books. But what do these colours mean? What if your child is on Yellow band but their friend is on Green? How long will it take for your child to be ready to move on to the next band? Can your child pick their favourite colours instead? Book bands may seem confusing at first, but they are a common system for grouping books according to their level of reading difficulty. Your child may

start reading books at the lowest level (Lilac or Pink), and move on to the next bands once their teacher feels they are ready. Using book bands helps children, parents and teachers know which books are suitable to read at each stage of the child's reading journey. It's important to remember that it isn't a race to the finish, and that reading is about understanding as well as being able to successfully read (decode) words.



# What do the colours mean?



<b>Lilac Level 0</b>	These books are wordless and are fully illustrated to prepare children for reading.
<b>Pink A Level 1A</b>	Learners start to apply their early word reading skills to read simple sentences. There is a single sentence on every left-hand page. Content at these early levels is very much based around familiar experiences.
<b>Pink B Level 1B</b>	Similar to Pink A, but with one sentence on every page.
<b>Red A Level 2A</b>	Learners are developing their confidence to tackle slightly longer sentences. These books have 1–2 one-line sentences per page.
<b>Red B Level 2B</b>	As for Red A, but sentences can be longer than one line.
<b>Yellow Level 3</b>	Sentences are slightly more complex with more developed storylines and non-fiction texts.
<b>Blue Level 4</b>	The quantity of text gradually increases to approximately six lines per page. Books may include some abstract terms and non-fiction will include some sub-headings.
<b>Green Level 5</b>	Stories are less reliant on familiar experiences and include more sophisticated humour and suspense. There are a larger number of characters, and events sometimes continue over several pages.
<b>Orange Level 6</b>	The meaning of text is still straightforward, but readers should be able to understand without needing literal explanations.
<b>Turquoise Level 7</b>	Books include longer descriptions and feature a wider range of punctuation and unusual vocabulary.
<b>Purple Level 8</b>	Readers may be able to pick up themes and books may have short chapters. There are more opportunities for readers to ask and answer questions about characters.
<b>Gold Level 9</b>	Books contain challenging sentence structures, with more unknown words per page. Characters are more distinct and rounded.
<b>White Level 10</b>	Readers may be surprised or have their expectations challenged. There may be more than one point of view presented and information is suggested rather than spelled out.

# HOW TO READ WITH YOUR CHILD

You may know that it's really important to support and encourage reading at home, but what do you need to do when your child brings a book home, and how can you pick up where the teacher left off? The summary of key findings in *Reading for Enjoyment: A literature review* (2016, National Literacy Trust) shows that you can really make a difference.

"Parental beliefs, attitudes and behaviours directly support their child's reading for enjoyment and have also been linked with higher reading scores and higher reading motivations."

*Reading for Enjoyment: A literature review* (2016, National Literacy Trust)

Here are five steps to success when reading with your child:

## 1 Create a routine

It can be hard to find the perfect moment to sit down and enjoy reading together. If you can, get into a routine of reading at the same time each day so that you are more likely to stick to a daily reading session. Reading together at bedtime is a popular choice, but you might find early morning or after school sessions more successful if your child is too tired in the evening.

## 2 Make time to read little and often

Reading together doesn't have to take a long time; just ten minutes a day makes a positive impact. If your child is really engaged in the reading session, continue for longer, but if they are tired after a busy day at school (or if you're tired after a busy day at work ... ) just read a few pages to maintain the routine.

## 3 Prepare a reading environment

Learning to read can be hard and it feels even harder if there are lots of distractions at home. Try to find a quiet space – no TV, no siblings or pets making noise. Also think about being comfortable, in a place with enough light. Feeling relaxed will help your child to enjoy the experience even more.

#### 4 Get comfortable, engage with and support reading

Get settled and think about whether you are both sitting in good positions to see the text and that you are able to support as necessary during the reading session. Your main role is to check accuracy of word reading/decoding. Use the notes on the inside front cover of *Reading Planet* books to give you practical ideas when talking with your child about the text and for making the most of the content. These pages highlight tricky words and feature example questions to discuss with your child before, during and after reading the books to help develop understanding. There are also ready-to-read tips and activities to try. These simple activities are based on the latest research findings on how children learn to read most effectively.

#### 5 Praise after reading

It's important to offer encouragement whilst your child is reading, but try and praise your child for at least one achievement (even if the session wasn't very successful!) after reading. This ends on a positive note and helps your child look forward to the next session.

### What if English isn't your home language?

For families whose first language isn't English, here are some additional tips for supporting your child's reading:

- ★ After your child has read to you in English, it is very valuable to talk about the book in your home language. You can talk about the pictures, the meanings of words and even retell the story, or summarise the content of a non-fiction book. This will help your child to develop their vocabulary and comprehension skills.
- ★ Try to get hold of the audio version of your child's reading books, so they can listen to the text being read while they follow the printed words. This will provide a pronunciation model for your child, as well as a model of expression and rhythm when reading aloud.
- ★ Use a good-quality bilingual dictionary so that you can look up the meanings of words you don't know. Picture dictionaries are also a fun way for your child to learn new words in English.
- ★ If you are unsure about the sounds your child is being taught to read (phonics), there are many phonics pronunciation video guides on the Internet that can provide a useful reference.
- ★ Look out for any workshops at your child's school that are designed to support EAL parents.

# HANDLING WORDLESS BOOKS

What, no words? Although you can't 'read' a wordless book to your child, you can still share and enjoy the stories together, so wordless books shouldn't be dismissed. They appear within the Lilac book band and are a really important first step to start a child's reading journey. The *Reading Planet* Lilac books have been specially designed to strengthen your child's communication and listening skills and tune them into sounds to prepare for reading. Without the distraction of text, children learn to retell a story in their own words by interpreting pictures.

**How do I get the most out of using wordless books with my child?**

- ★ Teach your child how to hold a book – look at which way round it goes; show how to and which way to turn the pages; show how far to hold the book from your face.
- ★ Look at the cover image first and think about what might be inside. Look at the back cover and the blurb to learn what the story will be about. Play 'find the author' by looking for the author name on the front cover.
- ★ Encourage your child to concentrate on each page in the book – like you, they may be tempted to 'skip through' to start with because there are no words. Tell them explicitly that we can read a story without any words by thinking about the pictures.
- ★ Be excited about 'finding out' the story as you look through the book. You can create suspense to engage your child by saying things like, *I wonder what will happen next?*, and *Wow, that surprised me!*
- ★ Ask what your child can see happening on the page (inferring), what they think will happen next (predicting), why they think that is happening (reasoning) and how it relates to their own life (applying).
- ★ Help to model advanced sentence structures – if your child says, *Look, playing!* You can follow up with, *Yes, look, those children are playing in the sandpit.*
- ★ You can also start to support your child with 'oral blending', a pre-reading skill that prepares them for reading with phonics at school. Choose an object from the picture, e.g. a tent. Say the sounds in the word slowly for your child to listen to, *t-e-n-t*, then encourage your child to say the whole word, *tent*.

# UNDERSTANDING PHONICS

Heard of phonics, but unsure what it actually is? It's something that your child's teacher is most likely using to teach your child to read, but it might be something that you find unfamiliar.

Phonics is an effective way to 'unlock' words and to help children make progress with reading. When we read, we look at the letters on the page and we say the sounds that they represent. We then associate each word with a meaning to be able to understand what the text is telling us. In English we have approximately 44 sounds of speech, but we only have 26 letters in our alphabet, so some sounds are represented by combining two, three or even four letters together.

Beginner readers are taught to match one sound with only one letter (e.g. s-a-t) to read simple words. Next, children start 'segmenting' and 'blending' the letters and sounds to break up and 'decode' words. This means that as they say the sounds, from left to right, they are able to 'hear' whole words (e.g. sat). As children progress and books become more complex, sounds can be represented by more than one letter (e.g. sh in **shop**), and sometimes one letter or group of letters represents different sounds (e.g. ow in **cow** and ow in **low**).

The aim with phonics is that children can recognise and process the letters and sounds through a word so fluently that word recognition becomes automatic. It doesn't end there though, as children need to maintain the skill of segmenting and blending to help tackle more complex words and books.

It's important to remember that children need their phonics skills to be backed up by comprehension and understanding, so it can be helpful for children to talk with adults about concepts and meanings whilst reading.



# ENCOURAGING READING FOR PLEASURE

As well as being good at reading and achieving good grades at school, it's really important that your child *enjoys* reading. Here are some top tips for encouraging your child to read for pleasure:

- 1** Be a good role model – let your child see you reading, and enjoying your reading, to show that reading at home isn't just for homework.
- 2** Provide books related to your child's interests and have plenty of reading material available at home that they can choose from in their own time. If your child is struggling with a particular book or genre, help them find a topic or character that they are interested in, even if this means reading magazines or comics – the more reading at home, the better!
- 3** Talk about the books your child is reading. It might help to ask questions about the books to help develop enthusiasm and comprehension.
- 4** Show your child that you are interested in the characters and storylines from their books to help build excitement for finding out more about the characters.
- 5** Even if your child is an able, independent reader, it's good to still read to them. Reading to your child from an early age helps to create a bond and a positive memory of reading, so it's important to continue reading to your child, especially bedtime stories.



- 6 During a reading session, get into character and put on funny voices if it helps your child to enjoy the story. You could also try pretending to be a character all day.
- 7 If during a reading session, you both really enjoyed a book, don't be afraid to reread it. You might learn something new each time.
- 8 Spend time in bookshops enjoying looking at books and let your child pick the ones they find most exciting. Many bookshops have fantastic displays and decorations to help children get involved in reading.
- 9 Join in with events at your local library so that your child can join in with exciting activities with other children. Often libraries offer author events which can be great fun, and also inspiring.
- 10 When talking to your child after school, be enthusiastic to see which book they have brought home and show that you are looking forward to hearing about it.
- 11 Encourage drawing, writing and game playing linked to book content. This helps your child engage with stories and shows that learning to read isn't just about sounding out words.
- 12 Try and make 'reading together time' a special time of the day, where you chat and enjoy one another's company. This helps your child look forward to reading at home.
- 13 Reading little and often can sometimes become a bit repetitive, so encourage changes such as reading in a different room of the house each day.



# USING YOUR CHILD'S READING RECORD

Your child might present you with a reading record. This is for you to fill in with your child at home. Filling in pages of blank grids every day might seem a bit tedious at first, so here are some ideas and examples for the types of comments you could write:

## ★ Positive praise

Rewarding comments can be directed to your child and help to raise their self-esteem and morale. For example, *Excellent concentration, Ben.*

## ★ Tracking progress

Create a record of new vocabulary that your child finds, and any key achievements. For example, *Helen was interested in new words 'bustle' and 'ponder' – we checked the meanings in a dictionary or Emily remembered to pause at the full stops.*

## ★ Communicating with the teacher

A brief note in the reading record is an effective way to communicate with your child's class teacher. For example, *Rachel only read a few pages today as she wasn't feeling well.*

## ★ Asking questions

It's not always possible to have a discussion with the teacher at school, so using the reading record can be a handy way to ask questions. For example, *We really enjoyed the story about the snail, can we have that one again, please?*

## ★ Noting difficult words

If your child finds a word hard, make a list and practise reading these words with your child every time you write in the reading record.

## ★ Tracking a variety of skills

It can be hard to avoid repetition and to think of different things to write. As well as difficult words, try to comment on *fluency, accuracy, comprehension, stamina, expression, engagement, vocabulary, grammar and punctuation.*



# HELPING STRUGGLING READERS

If you are worried that your child is struggling with their reading, you could try these ideas:

- ★ Try to observe and reflect on what it is your child is struggling with – do you think they are lacking a phonics skill? A comprehension skill? Or is it a memory retention issue?
- ★ Talk to the class teacher about your concerns and use your child's reading record to communicate any worries.
- ★ Remember that learning to read isn't a reflection of intellect – it's about learning a specific and challenging set of skills, so be patient as learning these won't happen overnight.
- ★ Don't allow your child to see your anxiety or frustration about their struggles. They might pick up on these and start to worry.
- ★ If your child is stuck on a specific word, don't be afraid to tell them the word and move on. There is a handy list of tricky words to look out for in the inside front cover of each *Reading Planet* book.
- ★ Take the pressure off the situation – it's okay to read together or to take it in turns to each read a page.
- ★ Be positive – give plenty of praise and encouragement, even for small steps of success.
- ★ Make sure you are up to date with your child's optician appointments – vision difficulties can sometimes go unnoticed and may affect reading skills.
- ★ If you are concerned that your child might be dyslexic, talk to your child's teacher and ask for advice. See [www.bdadyslexia.org.uk](http://www.bdadyslexia.org.uk) for further guidance.
- ★ Encourage your child to read by helping them find authors, topics or genres that they enjoy and are interested in. It's important to keep being positive about the reading experience. Give lots of praise for reading, even after your child has read magazines or texts other than school reading books.

# TROUBLESHOOTING TIPS

**By the time we get home from school my daughter is shattered – do I really need to read with her then?**

School can be exhausting and children need 'downtime' to play and relax at home. She won't enjoy reading if she can barely keep her eyes open! Perhaps try reading for a few minutes in the mornings or make it part of your weekend routine – the key is little and often.

**My daughter has been stuck reading books from the same book band and I'm worried that she isn't progressing fast enough. How long should it take to move through a band?**

There isn't a set amount of time, so try and avoid comparing your child's progress to other children or siblings. Even if your child is reading confidently, it's important that they can understand the books as well as being able to read the words. It's not just about finishing every book in a book band, it's about comprehension of the stories and text. Trust the judgement of your child's teacher – they will be checking the progress of each child and will know when it's time for your daughter to move onto harder books.

**I'm a single parent and I find it hard to engage with my son's reading. I don't have time to read novels myself, but I want to be a good role model. What can I do?**

You don't have to be a literary expert to be a good role model. Even reading newspapers or magazines can show your child that reading can be an enjoyable part of a daily routine. Try and find a subject that you both enjoy reading about and share this together.

**My child seems to want to race through the text and often makes lots of mistakes by guessing at words. What should I do?**

You need to be explicit and tell your child to slow down. Explain how important it is to be able to read words accurately. If they are racing through the words, guessing and making mistakes, do they understand the content of the text? It's important to be able to read words and understand what they mean.

## FURTHER READING

*Help Your Child Love Reading: A Parent's Guide*, Alison David (Egmont, 2014)

*Reading for Enjoyment: A literature review* (National Literacy Trust, 2016)

CLPE Reading Scales

[www.clpe.org.uk/library-and-resources/reading-and-writing-scales](http://www.clpe.org.uk/library-and-resources/reading-and-writing-scales)

Coventry University - speech rhythm sensitivity research

[www.coventry.ac.uk/research/areas-of-research/psychology-behaviour-achievement/literacy-research/](http://www.coventry.ac.uk/research/areas-of-research/psychology-behaviour-achievement/literacy-research/)

Department for Education – National curriculum assessments: 2016 sample materials

[www.gov.uk/government/collections/national-curriculum-assessments-2016-sample-materials](http://www.gov.uk/government/collections/national-curriculum-assessments-2016-sample-materials)

Department for Education – National curriculum in England: English programmes of study

[www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-curriculum-in-england-english-programmes-of-study](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-curriculum-in-england-english-programmes-of-study)

Reading for Pleasure

[www.literacytrust.org.uk/research/nlt\\_research/271\\_reading\\_for\\_pleasure\\_a\\_research\\_overview](http://www.literacytrust.org.uk/research/nlt_research/271_reading_for_pleasure_a_research_overview)

*Reading Planet*

[www.risingstarsreadingplanet.com](http://www.risingstarsreadingplanet.com)

The Centre for Literacy in Primary Education (CLPE)

[www.clpe.org.uk](http://www.clpe.org.uk)

The National Literacy Trust

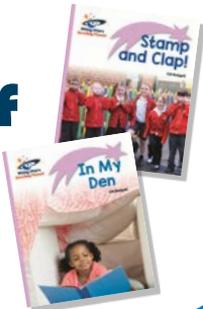
[www.literacytrust.org.uk](http://www.literacytrust.org.uk)

Help your child become a confident reader with Reading Planet!



**Lift-off**

Wordless books



**Rocket Phonics**

Fully decodable reading books



**COMET STREET**  
**KIDS**

Adventure stories



**Galaxy**

Wider reading



Find more guidance and free support at [risingstarsreadingplanet.com/parents](http://risingstarsreadingplanet.com/parents)