

## Simple advice on helping a pre-school child to read...

When our children are very young, there is a lot we can do to include them in the world of reading. This has nothing to do with teaching them any particular reading skills or making them do things they don't feel any enthusiasm for (thank goodness!). Instead, we are aiming to build up their motivation so that by the time they start school they WANT to learn to read.

- **Talk, talk, talk** - Surprisingly, talking helps reading! Encourage your child to be a chatterbox! The more experience children have in talking and being involved in conversations, the more they will be ready to read when they start school. From time to time, try setting aside special time with your child so that you can focus on and talk about an activity together, such as role-playing their favourite film or TV character.
- **Sharing books** - reading books to a child is the best way to involve them in the world of reading. Follow your child's interests when choosing books and make a cuddle and story a lovely way to end the day at bedtime.
- **Songs and Nursery rhymes** - these are great for building all the essential skills for learning to read. And of course, whether it's The Wheels on the Bus or Bob the Builder, most children love them!
- **Signs and Labels around us** - from about three, many children start to recognise the first letter in their name and enjoy looking out for it on road signs, shop names, book titles. This all helps!
- **Guess what happened to me** - stories don't just belong in books, they can be part of a child's everyday spoken experience as well. People tell stories all the time, whether they are anecdotes, jokes or re-tellings of traditional tales. These give children a great advantage when starting to read.
- **Parents who read** - it's vital that children understand that reading is something adults do. If your child sees that you love books and enjoy reading, then they will want to have a go themselves.
- **Playing 'I spy'** - nowadays children are taught to read by listening for and identifying the sounds in words (often called 'phonics'). Use the first sound in the word (not the letter), to make it easy for your child to join in the game. 'I spy with my little eye something beginning with mmm'.
- **Going to the library** - allow your child to look for and pick his own books, perhaps with your help. And remember to look at the non-fiction sections as well in case dinosaurs, trains, pirates or animals are your child's favourite and best!