

Reading with Ease



Children who read word by word often don't understand what they're reading. They miss the meaning of the story as they focus on each individual word. Fluent readers read whole sentences smoothly and with expression. They recognize words quickly and comprehend easily.

How does a reader go from learning single words to reading entire stories with ease? Through practice and repetition. Try the following suggestions to improve your youngster's reading fluency and comprehension.

Listen to books on tape

Enhance your child's reading fluency by giving her books on tape. Audio books, as they're also called, are available at libraries or bookstores. Often the book is included with the CD or cassette of the story being read aloud. Encourage your youngster to read along in the book while listening to the recording. She'll hear examples of smooth, effortless reading that she can imitate when she reads aloud.



Learn sight words

Fluent readers recognize and read sight words, such as "a," "you," "they," "have," and "because," without sounding them out. A good way to practice

sight words is to point them out in the books your child reads. For example, ask him to count how many times he can find the word "saw." Which word is used more frequently in his book—"and" or "the"? Ask your child's teacher for a list of sight words, or go online to www.createdbyteachers.com/sightfree/main.html.

Add excitement to reading

Help your youngster hear the difference between an exciting reading voice and a boring one. Read a paragraph or a page aloud in a monotone voice. Then, read it with expression by changing the tone and volume of your voice. For instance, speak in a low, growly voice if the character is a bear, or in a high-pitched voice for a bird. Ask your child to tell you which way sounds better and why. Have her try reading both ways. Which method does she think makes reading more enjoyable?

Practice with poetry

Choose a favorite poem, and copy it onto a sheet of paper. Cut the paper into strips—one for each line. Read the poem together line by line, using the

strips. Reading each strip as a phrase instead of reading each word separately helps your child read more fluently.



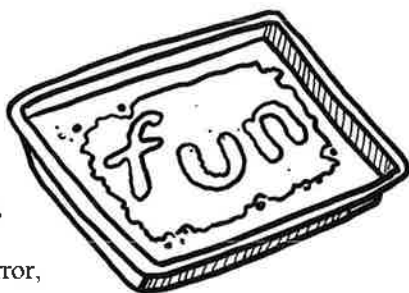
Attend a book reading

Give your youngster opportunities to hear a variety of experienced readers by taking him to book readings at libraries or bookstores. Or have your own story time at home. Let your child sit in a chair, facing the audience (you, his siblings, or even his favorite stuffed animals). To improve his comprehension, encourage him to pay attention to the punctuation in each sentence. For example, he should pause at each period and raise his voice at the end of the sentence for a question mark.



Build vocabulary

As your youngster comes across new words while reading, have her write the words in interesting ways. For example, she could write them with her finger on a steamy bathroom mirror, in sugar or flour on a cookie sheet, or in washable glue on a piece of paper (sprinkle glitter over the glue, and shake off the excess once the glue dries). Using her sense of touch will help your child remember the words more easily.



Try choral reading

Reading aloud together can improve your child's reading fluency. Choose a book that is slightly more difficult than what your youngster is used to reading. If he stumbles on a word, help him figure it out. Then, encourage him to concentrate on reading smoothly as you reread the sentence together.

Perform a "play"

To practice expressive reading, pick a book with lots of dialogue. *Example:* a book in Arnold Lobel's *Frog and Toad* series. Each of you choose a character. Tell your child to pretend she is an actress in a play, reading her character's lines with a great deal of expression. Take turns being the narrator and reading the non-dialogue parts of the story.

Predictable books

Predictable books are ones that repeat the same phrase over and over. These books encourage fluency—and children love reading them. An example of a repeating phrase is "Brown bear, brown bear, what do you see?" which appears on each page of Bill Martin Jr.'s book *Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?*

Seeing the same words many times helps your child recognize them. As he learns the words, he will no longer have to sound them out each time, and he will be able to focus more on the meaning of the story. Even beginning readers can learn to read smoothly by memorizing repeating phrases.

Here are several books to try with your youngster:

Are You My Mother? by P. D. Eastman

Chicken Soup with Rice: A Book of Months by Maurice Sendak

The Gingerbread Boy by Paul Galdone

Goodnight Moon by Margaret Wise Brown

If You Give a Mouse a Cookie by Laura Numeroff

It Looked Like Spilt Milk by Charles Shaw

The Little Old Lady Who Was Not Afraid of Anything by Linda Williams

The Napping House by Audrey Wood

Polar Bear, Polar Bear, What Do You Hear? by Bill Martin Jr.

The Teeny Tiny Woman by Barbara Seuling

The Three Little Pigs by Patricia Seibert

The Very Hungry Caterpillar by Eric Carle



Editor's Note:

While doing these activities, choose books that are appropriate for your child's reading level. If she knows every word in a book without hesitation, the book is probably too easy. On the other hand, books that are too hard may make her want to give up, and she won't be able to focus on understanding the story. If a book is just right, your youngster will be able to read most of the words fairly easily, and it will have just a few tricky words to keep her challenged.