

How to Help At Home

If your child gets stuck on a word, you can use one or more of the following:

- If you think the tricky word can be helped by looking at the picture, say: “Is there something in the picture that can help?” (Only if it will help and you might even have to point to it first).
- If you think the tricky word can be helped by thinking about what would make sense, say: “Let’s reread this part and think about what might make sense here.”
- If you think the tricky word is like another word that your child knows, say: “There is a part of the word you know” and use your finger to show the part. Or say: “This word is like the word _____” or say: “This word is like another word you know.”

If you see your child do something to help themselves figure out a hard part, you might say:

- I saw you_____. That was a good way to figure out the hard part.
- You (reread, looked at the parts, checked the picture, etc.). That helped you! Good job!
- You helped yourself right here. What did you do?

After reading you might engage the child in some conversation about the story. You might ask one or two of the following:

- Do _____’s feelings remind you of feelings that you have had? Explain how.
- Have you ever had similar experiences to _____?
- What characters in this book are you most like or unlike?
- Did the story end the way you thought it would end?
- What clues did the author give to help you predict the ending?
- How does the character feel about...? How do you know?
- What does _____ probably mean? How do you know?
- Why did _____ do that? How do you know?
- What do this character’s actions tell you about the character?
- What kind of person is the main character? How do you know from the story?
- What questions would you like to ask if the author were here?
- Is there anything that you still wonder about?
- What do you think about this part?
- Why did the author write this?
- What did you really like about this story? Character? Author’s way of telling the story?
- Let’s talk about the choice that _____made. Was it good or bad and why?
- What makes this a good story?
- What is your favorite part of the book and tell why it was your favorite part.
- Who is the bravest/ nicest/ most fair/ most interesting/ most important/ character? Why?

Cut-up sentence

Each night, your child will bring home the cut-up sentence in an envelope. Have the child lay out all the words and then re-assemble their message. Variations to try:

- Do it again and again to see if you get faster!
- Easy: Find the word _____. Now the word_____.
- Medium: Can you find a word that starts like _____. Or ends like _____?
- Harder: Pull one of the words out and say, “What’s this word?” “This one?”
- You could have the child write a word or two in the air or on paper, especially if they are having trouble with it.
- Optional: Some parents like having the child glue the words onto a piece of paper or in a journal afterwards. This is not required but might be helpful for some.

Letter and word games:

Occasionally, you can play a word or letter game with your child, such as one of the following:

1. Your Pile/My Pile: Variation on flash cards. Child says the word and if correct it goes into his pile. Any incorrect words go into your pile to see who wins at the end. Use only about 10 words at a time for this and some of the words could be repeats but written with uppercase letters. For example: can and Can or The and the.
2. Tic Tac Toe: Usual game board but instead of playing with X and O, choose a letter that is hard for your child and s/he’s that letter while you are a different letter. You can vary this game by playing with words—you write one word as you X and choose a different word that your child is learning for O! So simple.
3. If you Know: Choose an easy word that has a useful part—that is, it can be found in lots of other words. Write the word at the top of a piece of paper or on a dry-erase board. Say, “If you know ____, you also know_____.” You can have the child write the new word or you can write it and ask the child to figure it out. For example:

“If you know can, you also know”: man, fan, ran, an, cannot, can’t, etc.

Word families that are useful include: stop, play, can, not, cat, dog, get, see, like, make, sit, etc.