



## Tips for Parents of First Graders

Give your child lots of opportunities to read aloud. Inspire your young reader to practice every day!

- **Don't leave home without it.**

Have your child bring along a book or magazine any time you'll have to spend time waiting, such as at a doctor's or dentist's office. Fit in reading every chance you get!

- **Once is not enough.**

Encourage your child to re-read favorite books and poems. With repeated readings, he or she should be able to read more quickly and accurately.

- **Pick books that are at the right level.**

Help your child pick reading materials that are not too difficult. The aim is to give your child lots of successful reading experiences. Sometimes, slow readers will choose overly difficult books to "save face" and then are unable to actually read them.

- **Dig deeper into the story.**

Ask your child about the story you've just read together. Try questions that require your child to draw conclusions. Say something like, "Why do you think Clifford did that?" A child's involvement in retelling a story or answering questions goes a long way toward developing his or her comprehension skills.

- **Take control of the television.**

Encourage reading as a free-time activity, and set limits on the amount of time your child spends watching television or playing video games. It's difficult for reading to compete with these distractions, especially when a child is still struggling to read fluently.

- **Play word games.**

Use blocks or a chalkboard to play word games with your child. First write out a word like *mat*. Then change the initial sound. Have your child sound out the word when it becomes *fat* and then when it becomes *sat*. Next change the final sound, so the word changes from *sat* to *sag* to *sap*. Then change the middle sound, so the word changes from *sap* to *sip*. Make a game of it!

- **Give your child a clue.**

If your child is stumbling while trying to sound out a word, use your finger to point to the next letter and ask what the letter usually sounds like. This won't always work because many letters have more than one sound, but in the long run it is probably more helpful in building your child's early reading skills than using other types of "clues" like pointing to a picture on the page or guessing the word based on context.

- **I read to you, you read to me.**

Once your child can read, have him or her read aloud to you every day. You can take turns — you read one page and your child the next. It's just another way to enjoy reading together.

- **Read at bedtime.**

At bedtime, tell your child he or she can choose either reading or sleeping. Most kids will choose to read, as long as you don't offer something more tempting... like TV. Children enjoy this special time with parents. You can spend it either with you reading to them or them reading to you or both.

- **Punctuate your reading.?!**

When you read aloud, read with expression. Discuss how punctuation on a page represents ways of speaking. You can say, for example, "When we talk, we usually pause a little bit at the end of a sentence. The way we

show this pause in writing is to use a period."

- **Gently correct your young reader.**

When your child makes a mistake reading a word, gently point out the letters he or she overlooked or read incorrectly. Ask questions such as, "Do you remember what sound this letter makes?" Many beginning readers will guess wildly at a word based on its first letter. Children need to be encouraged to pay attention to all the letters in a word.

- **Be patient.**

When your child is trying to sound out an unfamiliar word, give him or her time to do so. If you've ever had to learn a foreign language, you know how difficult it can be to figure out a word you've never seen before.