

Learning to Read – Advice for Parents of Students who are Deaf / Hard of Hearing

Scaffolding and building on previous knowledge is vital. A child can only understand in print what is already in his/her head. Before learning to read, a good vocabulary must exist and exposure to everyday language and expressions is the first step. Oral language skills is a key component in learning how to read. Your child **needs** experience of books; learning to enjoy, them through looking at pictures, listening to rhymes, songs and stories and sharing stories from different people. The written word has more rules and more complex structure than spoken language. Otherwise the written word will have little meaning and the depth of understanding will not be there. The best way to increase vocabulary is to involve your child in interesting shared activities to build up confidence. Listen to what s/he has to say, respond and talk about whatever ideas s/he has initiated.

How to develop reading at home

1. Continue to read together. Spend time talking about the content. Share the story and the vocabulary. Focus on the vocabulary your child uses, expand and extend what s/he wants to tell you. That will make it all more meaningful to the child.
2. Focus on the vocabulary used around your child. As your child shows an interest, take time to explain and encourage that interest.
3. Share messages (written and verbal) that are sent to and from school, or from grandparents or friends. Pictures and written messages are the most fun because they give the child cues and focus attention as the child associates these with the language used in discussion.
4. Read the story to your child. Take turns in reading – a page each! When you are reading, keep the intonation and rhythm at your usual pace to maintain the tempo and feelings of the story. This will set a good example of running speech.
5. Meaning can be lost if reading pace is slowed down. Intonation and stress patterns are crucial to meaning, which we can't absorb from single words, e.g. 'book' could mean anything, while, "You choose a funny book or a scary book" has more meaning.