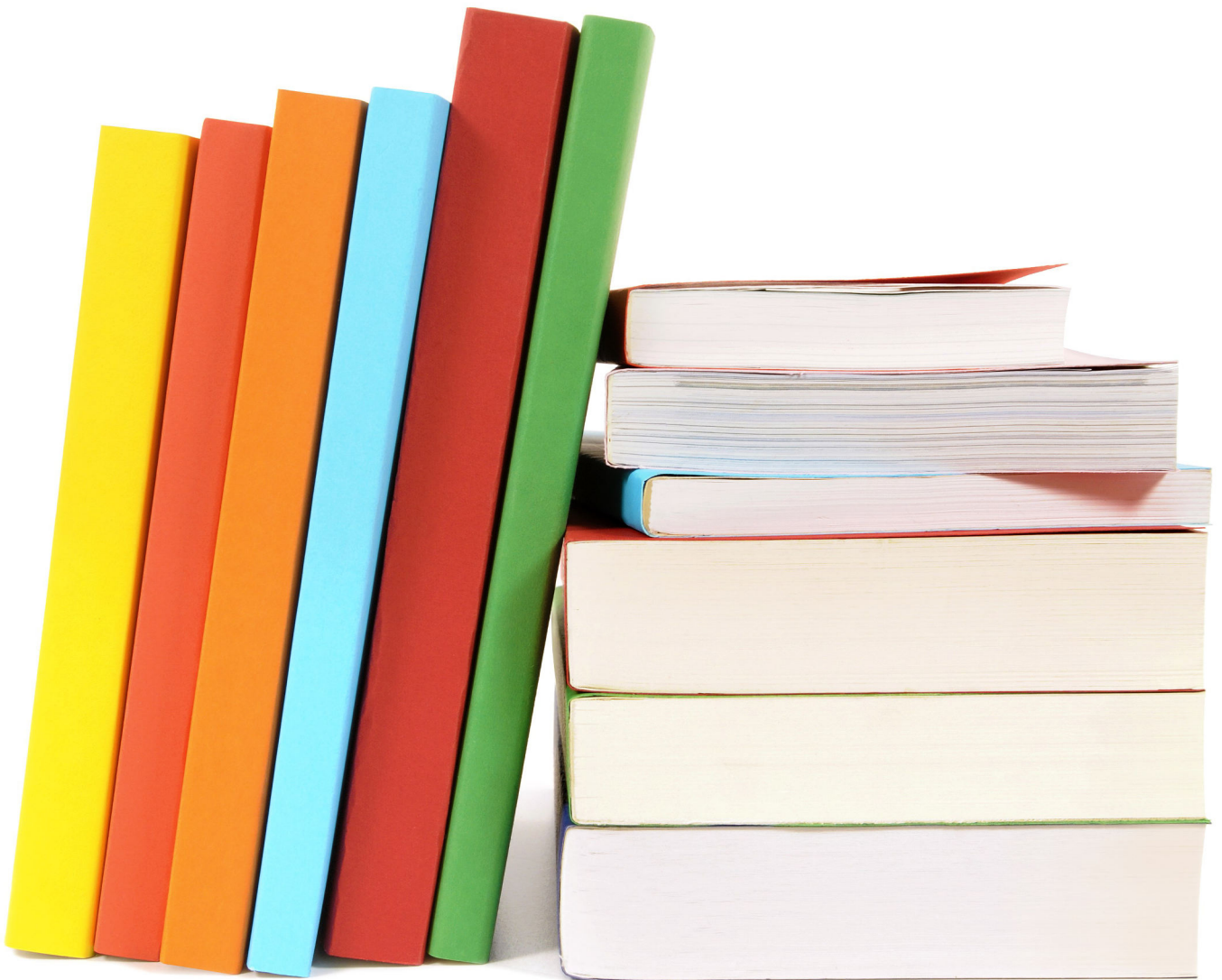




Etone College

How to support your child with
LITERACY SKILLS



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Introduction

The transition from primary to secondary school is an exciting time for both parents and children. However, you may be worrying about the extra demands of secondary school and wondering how you can support your child with their school work. This leaflet offers ideas that you can choose from, to help your child as they move into and through secondary school.

As a parent/carer you are the person who knows your child best, so you are ideally placed to help them with reading, writing, speaking and listening. One of the best ways you can help your child do well at school is by helping them to enjoy reading for pleasure – whether they like magazines, newspapers, novels or comics. Research shows that children who enjoy reading do better at school, and that parents play a key role in helping to develop this love of reading.

Research Findings: Reading Means Achieving

Recent research into the reading skills of 15 year olds across the world found that children who are more interested in reading do better at school than those who don't read for pleasure.

The study also found that parents who talk to their children about books, TV programmes and films help to keep their children interested in reading. Having books, newspapers and magazines around at home also made a difference to how interested children were in reading.

Reading Ideas

- Join the local library. It costs nothing to join and books can be borrowed for free. There are lots of events going on in libraries that you can go to, and libraries can give your child the chance to choose from hundreds of books. All libraries have free internet access as well.
- Encourage your child to use the library at Etone. It is open until 4.30pm every day and 4.00pm on a Friday.
- Talk about the pictures and characters in books that they are reading. You could even make up your own stories to go with them.
- Look at newspapers together and point out more unusual words.
- Encourage your child to read the words on food packets when you are unpacking shopping or cooking.
- Have a longer reading session together. Get your child to choose a selection of their favourite things to read.
- Get your child to read to younger brothers and sisters. This will make them feel like the 'expert' and encourage your younger children to read as well.
- If you don't like reading out loud, audio books can do the job for you.
- Get your child to retell a story or article they've read in their own words.
- Let your child choose books that they want to read. Find books about things you know your child likes –for example, dinosaurs, space or maybe TV tie-ins.
- Mrs Elliott, our librarian, can help find books about hobbies, interests, sports or TV programmes.
- Show your teenager that it is as much fun to read a book as it is to watch TV or play on the computer.
- Create a quiet, well-lit space in your home to encourage reading.
- Make sure that your home contains books that will interest your teenager.

- Encourage your teenager to read magazines, newspapers or the sports guide. Leave them around your home. It doesn't really matter what your child reads as long as they read!
- Subscribe to a magazine that your teenager has an interest in.
- Share articles you've read from the newspaper or a magazine, especially if it's something your teenager is interested in. Sunday supplements are particularly good.
- Play audio books in the car. This will encourage reading for enjoyment.
- Link books and reading to films at the cinema or video games that they know.
- Introduce books which are part of a series, and biographies.
- Ask teenagers to recommend books for younger readers in the family.
- Make use of e-books and e-book readers such as Kindles.
- Go through a TV listings guide together to choose what you want to watch.
- Read a match report for your team together.
- Get your child to keep a record of the books they have read, perhaps giving each book a star rating or drawing a picture or writing something about the books that will remind them of it in the future. It is important though not to make this seem like school work.
- Don't forget magazines, comics, newspapers and non-fiction (fact) books. Research shows that as long as children choose to read for pleasure their education benefits.
- Try some skimming and scanning together. Skimming is when you read through a piece of text quickly to find out what the main idea is; scanning is glancing through a piece of text to find a specific piece of information. (You can do this with a newspaper – perhaps asking your child to find something out for you. Why not ask them to scan a newspaper for news about a favourite footballer or to find out the weekend weather, or get them to skim read a recipe to tell you the basic steps?)
- Help your child to work out what an unfamiliar word means by getting them to read the rest of the sentence and look for clues.
- Help by testing your child when they have spellings to learn, and by encouraging them to look up words they don't know in a dictionary.

Top Tips for Hearing your Child Read

PARENT POWER: PARENTS MAKE THE DIFFERENCE, SAY EXPERTS

A recent study has found that children who were reading to their parents improved their reading skills a great deal, even if the parents could not read English or read at all in any language.

- Use praise every time your child reads, even if they don't get everything right first time.
- Remembering 'pause, prompt, praise' helps. Wait before you correct a mistake so that your child has a chance to get it right themselves, then give your child clues to help them get the word right, and finally praise them if they get the word right or even try to.
- A word you will hear from school when children are learning to read is 'phonics'. This means the letter sounds rather than the letter names.
- Wait until the end of a line before correcting mistakes when you are reading together.
- This will give time for self-correction. If your child doesn't know a word, get them to guess what it means from the other words around, or say 'something' instead and go back later to work out the word.
- Spending some time reading together each week can really help your child progress with reading.

- Long words can be made easier by clapping out the chunks of the word (syllables). For example, there are two in luck-y and three in an-i-mal.
- Some children need lots of practice and others want to read the same book again and again. This is a normal part of learning to read.
- Once older children have got the mechanics of reading (the 'how to'), there is a lot parents can do to help children enjoy reading.
- It is very important for children to see reading as something they can do in their spare time for fun, as well as a tool they need to help them at school. This is because research shows that children who read for pleasure do better at school.
- Read non-fiction together and talk about what new information has been found out. Get your child to find facts and do lots of talking about the information being read.

GAMES

Why not play games like Scrabble and Pictionary to help develop your child's English skills in a fun and relaxed manner? These games are great for the family and support the development of literacy.

Top Tips for Encouraging Writing

- **Get children to emulate the style of their favourite author:**
By the time children reach the age of 6, they may have already started to develop a preference for a particular author or genre. Get children to ‘Magpie’ or borrow literary devices, vocabulary, plots and story structure ideas from the books they read on a regular basis. Children can then apply the information they have gleaned to their own extended pieces of writing.
- **Encourage children to write at every opportunity:**
If children are intimidated by longer pieces of writing, simply get them to tackle shorter pieces. Children can help you write the weekly shopping list or write thank-you letters to friends/family members that have given them birthday presents. If families take a holiday during school breaks, children can write postcards to loved ones using the same structures they use for letter writing.
- **Give children incentives for writing well:**
When children have tried to use a variety of techniques in their written work, you may want to reward them with a ‘Best Writer’ sticker or certificates. You could also give them the opportunity to type up their piece of work as this is something that they will really relish.
- **Encourage children to write in a journal:**
Writing in a journal or diary on a daily or weekly basis will ensure that children will have regular opportunities to improve their writing skills. Maybe try giving children ‘free writing’ books and, as their work is not assessed, children will feel they have the freedom to choose what they write about – this often leads to a more creative piece of writing.
- **Find a pen pal:**
Writing to a pen pal in their home country or abroad will help get children excited about their writing and encourage them to work on their basic skills in this area.

HELP

Useful Organisations and Websites

Below is a list of organisations and websites where you can get more information about reading with your child.

Barrington Stoke is an award-winning publisher that makes books for reluctant, dyslexic, disenchanted and under-confident readers. www.barringtonstoke.co.uk Tel: 0131 557 2020

BBC Bitesize is widely recognised as a tool to help support your child at home with literacy. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/education/subjects/z3kw2hv>

Booktrust promotes children's reading and produces a wide range of information for young readers including booklists. www.bookheads.org.uk (website for teenagers), tel: 020 8516 2977

British Dyslexia Association is the national organisation for specific learning difficulties. It represents over two million dyslexic children and adults. It is one of the world's leading dyslexia organisations. www.bda-dyslexia.org.uk Tel: 0118 966 8271 (helpline). There are many other support organisations for children with dyslexia. For more information visit www.literacytrust.org.uk/links/special.html#dyslexia

Education Quizzes is a website that provides fun and interactive literacy style games to help support pupils in key stage 3. <http://www.educationquizzes.com/ks3/english/>

The National Literacy Trust is a charity dedicated to building a literate nation. The National Literacy Trust's website provides up-to-date information about literacy for all age groups in the UK. There is a section for parents including details of useful organisations, research, statistics, events, resources and links. www.literacytrust.org.uk Tel: 020 7828 2435 for information and advice.



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