

How can I help my child enjoy reading? A collection of ideas for parents

A short version of a collection of ideas kindly provided by the
School Inspection Division of Kanton Basel-Land

Learning to read is a long process in which you as parents can actively and effectively support and encourage your child. Good reading skills promote the academic achievement of your child.

What if the first language isn't German?

You can support your child equally if you don't speak German well or at all. Most importantly you must encourage your child's speaking and reading in the language that you speak fluently. That is usually your own first language. If a child is fluent in his or her first language it's much easier to master the transition to the German language.

The following 7 tips are suggestions of the most effective techniques for supporting your child.

Tip 1: Talk to your child

Oral language lays the foundation for reading. Through listening and speaking your child is guided to language. Through talking and singing the sound of language is conveyed to your child. This makes your child's acquisition of reading skills easier. The following points describe how to support your child's oral language development:

- Tell stories about yourself, grandparents and relatives.
- Talk to your child about the things you do and the things you think about.
- Ask your child questions.
- Encourage your child to tell you what he or she thinks and feels.
- Ask your child to tell you about what he or she has experienced throughout the day.
- Give your child time to talk. Let them find their own words to express themselves.
- Teach your child rhymes and counting games. Sing children's songs with them.

Tip 2: Make reading fun

Reading and reading out loud can be fun for the whole family. The following tips support your child's learning to read.

- Read your child's favourite story as often as he or she wishes. Choose books that are fun for your child.
- Read books with repetitive parts out loud and encourage your child to read with you.
- Point to the words as you read. This helps the child connect the spoken words with the printed ones.
- Use different kinds of texts: Stories, poems, newspaper or magazine articles, comics.
- If your child can sleep late the next morning, set aside the previous evening for reading. Allow your child to stay up later or to read in bed.
- Encourage family and friends to give your child books as gifts.
- Visit a library with your child.
- Get a magazine subscription for young people for your child.

Tip 3: Read every day

Children love rituals. Reading is something that you and your child can look forward to together. If you take time for reading you show your child that reading is important and fun.

- Start reading to your child at an early age.
- Appoint a time, preferably every day, when you concentrate on reading together.
- Arrange a cosy corner for reading.
- Choose a variety of books.
- Read out loud slowly so that your child can visualize the story.
- Keep on reading out loud even after your child has learned to read. You experience new worlds together and can enjoy the magic of shared reading.

Tip 4: Be a role model for your child

As parents you are an important role model for your child. If he or she sees you reading for fun or to inform yourself, he or she understands that reading is a valuable activity.

- Read recipes, packaging labels, brochures etc. out loud.
- Read traffic signs and names of shops and restaurants with your child.
- Use cookbooks, the telephone book, an atlas, and dictionaries to look for information.
- Read cards, letters or e-mails from friends and family with your child.

Tip 5: Talk about books

Talking about books is just as important as reading. Through this your child can establish a connection to her or his experiences. He or she will also have the opportunity to expand her or his own vocabulary with new words and phrases.

- Speak with your child about which books he or she would like to read.
- Talk about a favourite book from your childhood.
- Encourage your child to guess what the next rhyme could be while reading a poem.
- Encourage your child to ask questions about a story you are reading out loud.
- Encourage your child to practice criticism. Does he or she agree with the opinion of the author?
- Interrupt reading to ask questions about the text.
- Give your child time to think about a story. Consider asking more questions a few days later.
- Talk to your child after reading a story. This way you can find out if your child understood it.

Tip 6: Listen when your child reads

While you listen your child gets the chance to practice and improve his or her reading. Your reaction and attention are important.

- Show your child that the story she or he is reading is fun. Show interest and ask questions.
- Give your child time to spell hard words and read them by him or herself.
- Make sure that reading and reading out loud are not interrupted.
- Make sure your child doesn't choose texts that are too difficult.
- Take turns reading and try to read things together.

Tip 7: Appreciate your child's efforts

Learning to read takes time, practice and a lot of support from teachers and parents.

- Praise your child when he or she reads.
- Help your child find appropriate books, for example, in the library.

You are not alone

You are not alone when supporting your child's development of reading skills. Siblings or other family members can also help you. Speak to your child's teacher about how you can support your child. Your interest helps your child improve his or her academic achievement.