

Shared Reading – Practical Tips and Resources

A guide for Foster Carers



Before you start reading – a quick check

- Is it a calm moment?
Check your child has their basic needs met e.g. not hungry, thirsty or needing the toilet
- Are you both comfortable?
Does your child have a favourite blanket, cushion, fiddle toy, soft lighting
- Have you signalled that there is no pressure to read?
Just look at the pictures/listen to the story for a few pages/use a turn-taking system
- Consider how you are conveying your interest?
Encourage your child/ask questions/discuss pictures/welcome interruptions/recap together what happened previously



During reading – some handy phrases

- 'I wonder what they are feeling?'
- 'What did you notice in this picture?'
- 'I wonder what might happen next?'
- 'This reminds me of when...' (a chance for the adult to model sharing something from their life)
- Leave a pause and wait... See what your child is thinking and let them offer their thoughts

Strategies to try

- Take turns to read a sentence/section/page each
- Retell the story together using only the pictures
- Read a bit slower than feels natural – this gives your child's brain time to process, build images and make connections
- Try varying your voice for different characters
- Be close! Sitting side-by-side or with your child leaning in allows them to regulate with your calm body
- Let your child choose – children are more motivated to read when they are interested and have choice over what they read



Troubleshooting

- Some children find it easier to listen to a story while doing something with their hands such as colouring, playing with a toy or putty
- A child may repeatedly request the same book – this is healthy attachment behaviour! The familiar story is predictable and safe. Keep reading it whilst gently introducing others on a similar theme with a linked character etc
- Some children worry about mis-reading a word. Adults can model errors to normalise this. Children often benefit from additional processing time but if still unsure then offer the word gently so the flow is not lost

Resources and interesting reading

- [‘Stories that connect us’ video](#)
- [BookTrust Report – ‘The relational value of reading: insights from kinship care families’](#)
- [Building bonds through sharing books - BookTrust report and webinar](#)
- [Words for Life - National Literacy Trust - Practical shared reading guidance](#)
- [BookTrust - reading lists and recommendations](#)
- [West Sussex Libraries - My Year of Reading resources](#)
- [Using picture books to share and retell stories - Cbeebies Advice](#)