



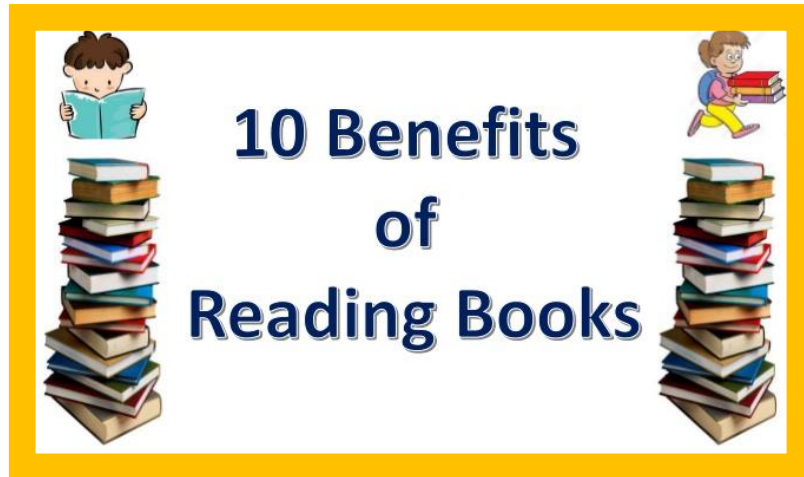
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# **Raising Readers Together**

**A Guide for Parents to Help Your Child  
Become a Better Reader  
Year 4**

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- 1. It improves fluency and speed of reading**
- 2. Reading exercises children's brains and improves concentration**
- 3. Reading teaches children about the world around them**
- 4. Reading improves a child's vocabulary and leads to more highly-developed language skills in speaking and writing**
- 5. Reading develops a child's imagination and creativity**
- 6. Reading helps kids develop empathy**
- 7. Children who read do better academically**
- 8. Reading is a great form of entertainment**
- 9. Reading relaxes the body and calms the mind**
- 10. Reading together builds closeness between parent and child**

## How do children read?

We all agree that reading is key to your child's development and as a school we are committed to helping our children grow into confident and independent readers. We endeavour to foster a love of reading right from nursery all the way through to Year 6 and to this end have invested thousands of pounds in quality books, reading guides, class texts and our fantastic library. Our pupils do indeed love books and love reading. However, reading is more than simply decoding the words on a page, it involves understanding what is being read and drawing enjoyment and knowledge from it.



Reading requires 6 basic skills:

1. **Decoding** – recognising the sounds that make up words
2. **Fluency** – recognising familiar words and even unfamiliar ones by sight recognition to be able to read faster without pausing to decode each word
3. **Vocabulary** – Knowing the meaning of the words being read
4. **Sentence structure** – understanding how words have meaning within sentences and how sentences connect meaning through a text.
5. **Reasoning and knowledge** – Reading between the lines and deducing what the writer is saying indirectly, as well as the background knowledge to relate to what they read. Look at the following sentence: "Akimbo's heart pounded and his hands were clammy as he saw the lion approach the bush where he was hiding." The reader must know that fear causes hearts to pound and hands to sweat to be able to correctly deduce that Akimbo was terrified because the writer is not making it explicit. Background knowledge of countries and animals will help to further deduce that Akimbo is in the African wild because that is where one would find lions and that these animals are dangerous, which is why he is fearful and is hiding. *[See Appendix A for further information]*
6. **Working memory and attention** – This requires children Pay attention to what is being read and retain that knowledge to apply to the rest of the text, and have the ability to recall what has been read.



### How children develop as readers

Children develop these skills through a combination of teaching and practice. As your child is taught to recognise letters and sounds and words, they connect the words to pictures and meanings. As they are guided in their reading in school, they develop a growing bank of vocabulary and learn how to connect sentences to images and move on to find meaning in larger chunks of texts. Through the process of specific teaching, discussing and asking

questions, children develop an understanding of the process of reading and the joy of engaging with texts. To be able to master this skill and make swift progress children require plenty of practice. Not only by sitting and reading books but by constant exposure to text and opportunities to read. Children can start with simply reading signs, street names, advertisements, notices, leaflets and labels. Practice however, is the most important aspect of developing as a reader which ultimately leads children to read for pleasure.

While children are explicitly taught to read in the early years and have plenty of opportunity to read in school, their day is also busy with many other kinds of learning and socialising with their peers. Which is why to gain the reading practice they need, you as parents are vital to the process.

### How can you help your children read better?

To motivate children to read often and daily they need you to spend time reading to them and listening to them read aloud to you.

Recent research suggests that starting from nursery age, if children read 20 minutes a day, they will be exposed to 1.8 million words per year. Listening to them read encourages children to

- Read more willingly
- Develop speed and fluency
- Read accurately as you correct their pronunciation
- Ask questions when they don't understand something
- Make sense of what they are reading through your questions

Listening to your children read also helps parents to

- Check if their child is reading at a suitable level
- Help their child understand and pronounce tricky words
- Provide extra knowledge if they don't know something about a subject
- Find out if their child actually understands what they are reading
- Identify if there are problems with reading and understanding and help them quickly





## Why you should read to your children

Reading is not just a one way street, children benefit from listening to adults read to them right until the end of primary school. In school children are regularly read to in class and in the library by teachers, volunteers, older children and the librarian.

As parents, you can do the same at home. Reading aloud to your child has many benefits:

- It encourages reluctant readers to engage with books as it removes the stress out of struggling to read.
- It allows children to be exposed to books above their reading level as you can explain what they cannot understand.
- It helps them learn more advanced vocabulary and correct pronunciation.
- It teaches children to read with intonation and expression
- It encourages conversation and discussion.
- It shows your child how much you value reading.
- It helps them to calm down and relax before bedtime and disengage from electronics and screens.
- It develops a close bond between parent and child.

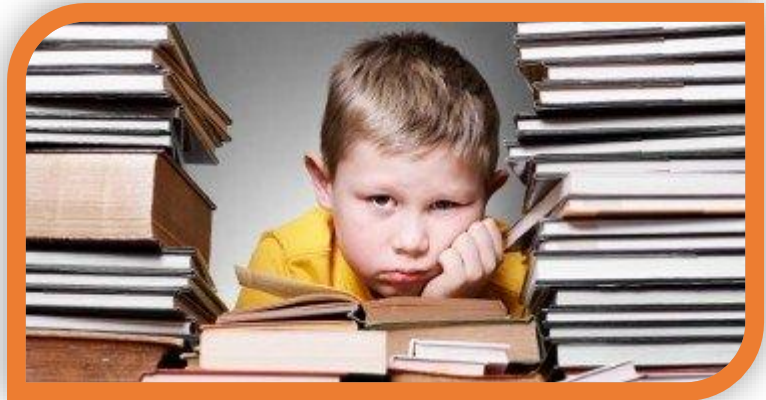
## How to make reading a pleasure

The process of listening to your child read or reading to them can be enhanced by a few simple things.

- Choose a quiet time to read. No TV, electronics or other distractions.
- Have a set time to read. Your child should know that this is reading time e.g. after a bath or before bed.
- Find a comfortable spot to read together where you can both be relaxed.
- Allow your child to choose the book they want you to read even if it is the same book!
- Choose books together by visiting the library and bookshops and looking at the school library online.
- Try different reading materials: comics, picture books, non-fiction, magazines, online stories, even audio books where you can both listen together.
- Bring stories to life. Read with expression giving characters different voices and mannerisms and even get your children to voice a different character.
- Be positive and encouraging when your child reads, giving them time to correct errors and pointing mistakes gently. Praise them a lot, reading is actually a hard skill to master.
- Talk about the book as you read. Pause and ask questions so that your child understands what they are reading. Explain things if they are unfamiliar with them. Discuss the book after they've finished reading.
- Explore a theme or setting further by looking at other books. If you are reading the Akimbo books by Alexander McCall, you can learn about game reserves, endangered animals and Africa. This will teach your children that reading is not just a chore but a way to learn about new and interesting things.

## How to tackle reading problems

Many parents think that their children are fluent and independent readers; however, there are also lots of children who appear to read fluently but have poor comprehension of language (vocabulary) and meaning. These children struggle further up in school when they attempt to tackle longer passages of reading comprehension. Here are a few tips to help specific problems:



**Decoding words** – give them plenty of time (and encouragement) to sound out and blend words. Give them lots of practice by reading similar level books over and over again. Get them to sight read by pointing out familiar words wherever you see them.

**Vocabulary difficulties** – ask if they understood a word even if they read it correctly. Try to help them figure out the meaning from the context. If they can't do it, then explain the meaning. If you don't know, look it up together in an online dictionary which will also have a recording of the pronunciation. Read books at the right level so the words are not too hard for your child.

**Losing the place on the page** – this is a common problem with new readers. Help them by using a finger, pencil or ruler as a guide. Encourage them to do this by themselves every time they read.

**Trouble staying focused** – if your child has trouble concentrating on a book then choose shorter, high interest books such as funny books, short stories, sports magazine, non-fiction or graphic novels (cartoons). Allow children to choose the book they are interested in reading rather than the one you think they ought to read. Ask the school librarian for suggestions. It is better they read *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* and *Shoot!* rather than nothing at all.

**Trouble understanding what they read** – Pause at appropriate times and check your child has understood what they've just read. What happened just now? Why did Jane say that? What do you think will happen next? If they are struggling with comprehension show them how things connect in their own lives and in films and TV. What will happen if you keep refusing to help? Can you see that is what will happen to Jane in this story? Use picture books or newspaper photos to show your child how to interpret images. Can you tell what this man could be feeling from the way he is talking?

**Trouble remembering what they read** – Help children to visualise what they've read. Get them to draw a picture. For older children, they can jot down some words in on a post-it which will help them remember what they'd read the next day. Try reading shorter texts and slowly move to longer books. Play memory games with words and pictures.

## When to ask for help



If you have applied the above suggestions to help your child improve their reading but still feel that they are struggling, then your first point of call is your child's class teacher. Make an appointment to speak to the teacher privately and discuss your concerns. There are many reasons that a child may be struggling to read despite support at home. Here are a few:

- Sight/ hearing problems
- Developmental difficulty
- Dyslexia (problem decoding words)
- ADHD (problems concentrating)

Your child's teacher or the SENCO will know how to guide you on the next steps to take. The most important thing is not to transfer your anxiety onto your child or to compare him or her with other children, but to remain encouraging and positive to help your child feel that they can overcome the problems. Continue reading to them as this will help expose them to the richness of language even if they can't access it directly themselves right now.

## Reading at school

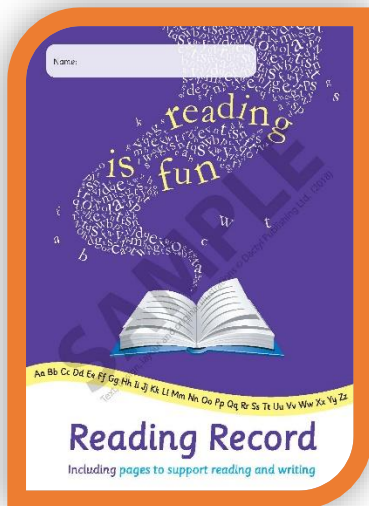
In school, Letters and Sounds is used to teach phonics from when children start with us in EYFS, where they participate in daily synthetic phonics sessions (nursery - three times per week). Phonic awareness helps the development of reading by segmenting and blending sounds. We use a mixture of guided reading, whole class shared reading and one-to-one reading to support children in their development, building from word recognition through to developing children's comprehension and inference skills. Our books are banded according to the Oxford Reading Scheme and parents are well-informed about their children's reading stage. Pupils will be bringing stage books home to read with you as they develop as readers.



In KS2, the VIPERS (Vocabulary, Inference, Predict, Explain, Retrieve, Sequence or Summarise) approach is used to develop children's reading stamina, vocabulary and comprehension skills further. Our pupils are encouraged to read for pleasure and children are heard reading individually as well as in groups. Parents are given clear expectations about reading at home. At this stage pupils will be independently selecting books from the school library to read in class and bring home. Classroom reading time is also given to encourage independent reading.

In addition to this, children will be read to by an adult from EYFS right through to Year 6 to model good reading and promote reading for pleasure.





## Reading records

A Reading record is provided to each child to record what they have been reading. It also provides an opportunity for parents to comment on their child's reading.

Parents of younger children will need to complete the reading record regularly. Older children should be able to complete their own reading records. The class teacher will monitor these at least once a week and provide feedback, thereby ensuring a two-way partnership between home and school.

Example parent/carer comments:

- Read familiar words independently but found some new words difficult.
- Worked out new words by sounding them out.
- Used the picture cues and the first sound of a word to work out words.
- Understood the story well.
- Good discussion about events/characters in the story and was able to retell the story with prompts.
- Enjoyed the story because ...
- Was able to predict what happens next in the text.
- Self-corrected own errors independently.
- Struggled to concentrate.
- He made a number of errors because he was not looking carefully enough
- Found this book too hard to read
- Able to read this book with lots of help
- Struggled to work out a lot of the vocabulary
- Reading sounded robotic and stilted
- Created tension as he did not want to read
- Did not understand what he has read
- Could not retell the story



## Reading Lists and Library

We have created comprehensive reading lists for each year group in the school and these can be found on the school website. These lists feature classic and new texts and are arranged according to genres and themes. The lists are available to the pupils to help them select books from the school library but you can use them to help you choose the best books to suit your child's needs. The school library also provides a huge selection of books that pupils can access from Year 2 upwards. The library can be accessed

online to browse and reserve books. For further information, please speak to the librarian.



### Our expectations

As a school, we are fortunate to have an incredibly supportive parent community. We know that you want your children to succeed and are prepared to invest time and money to do just that. We also know that you are busy, usually working full time, with more than one child, juggling home and work life. It is easy to leave children to get on with their books especially if you think they are independent readers. However, your children will continue to need your support.

We have set out in the following pages the guidelines specific to your child's year group. All we ask of you as parent is to do the following:

- listen to your children read daily (at least once a week at the absolute minimum)
- read to them daily (or as often as possible)
- use the year specific guide below during your reading time to prompt and ask questions
- talk to them about what they are reading
- help them select books they want to read
- help complete their reading records

With these steps, together we can help raise your children become better readers.

### Further information

Here are some links for you to look at if you want to know more about helping your child read:

<http://www.oxfordowl.co.uk/Reading/>

<http://www.lovereadings4kids.co.uk/>

<https://www.harrow.gov.uk/libraries>

<https://www.barnet.gov.uk/libraries/children-and-young-peoples-library-services/recommendations-children>

<https://www.booktrust.org.uk/>

<https://literacytrust.org.uk/parents-and-families/>

<https://www.readingrockets.org/audience/parents> (US site)

<https://www.understood.org/pages/en/families/> (US site)



# Reading With Your Year 4 Child

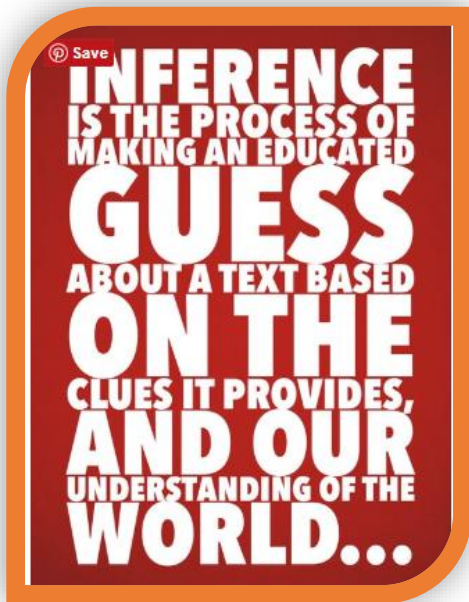
This part of your guide is specific to your child's year group. We have set out the National Curriculum Expectations below as it applies to reading in Year 4. The tables below show how you can support your child meet these expectations when reading with them at home through careful prompts and questions.

## National Curriculum Expectations for Year 4

By year 4, pupils should be able to independently, fluently and enthusiastically read books written at an age-appropriate interest level. They should be able to read them accurately and at a speed that allows them to focus on understanding what they have read, rather than on decoding individual words. They should be able to decode most new words outside of their spoken vocabulary, making a good attempt at the word's pronunciation. As their decoding skills become secure, efforts should be made to introduce children to new words which will increase their vocabulary. This should be done through discussion and by introducing children to a wide range of texts, including stories, poems, plays and non-fiction pieces on a wide range of subjects. Children in year 4 should be securing the skill of reading silently to themselves.

Year 4 children are expected to:	To support this, you could say:
apply their knowledge of root words, prefixes and suffixes, both to read aloud and to understand the meaning of new words they meet	Can you find a word which begins with the prefix <i>dis-</i> ? What does the prefix <i>anti-</i> mean? So what could this new word mean?
develop positive attitudes to reading and an understanding of what they have read	What happened in your story? What kind of text would you like to read next?
listen to and discuss a wide range of fiction, poetry, plays, non-fiction and reference books	What did you think about...? Shall we go and watch a play about...? Have you ever read a... poem?
use dictionaries to check the meaning of words they have read	I'm not quite sure what it means either - shall we use a dictionary?
increase their familiarity with a wide range of books, including fairy stories, myths and legends, and retell some of these orally	What genre is this text? What happens in the story of...? Do you know any myths? Could you tell... a bedtime story?

identify themes and conventions within texts	What message do you think this story is trying to tell us?
prepare poems and playscripts to read aloud and to perform, showing understanding through intonation, tone, volume and action	Would you like to read a poem to us after dinner? This part of the script is a troll speaking; how might they say it?
discuss words and phrases that capture the reader's interest and imagination	What an interesting use of words; why do you think the author chose those?
recognise some forms of poetry, e.g. free verse, narrative poetry	Do you know what kind of poem this is? What can you see?
check that the text makes sense to them	What do you think that is saying?
explain the meaning of new words in context	What does... mean? I'm not quite sure. I thought it meant...
ask questions to improve their understanding of the text	Is there anything you want to ask that you're not sure about?
draw inferences, such as inferring characters' feelings, thoughts and motives	How do you think... is feeling? What makes you think that? Why did he make that choice?
predict what might happen from the details stated and implied	If they..., what might they do next? Who could it be? What makes you think that?
identify the main ideas drawn from more than one paragraph and summarise these	So, what has this part of the story been about? Have you spotted a theme in the story?
identify how language, structure and presentation contribute to meaning	Why do you think the author has used... in the text?
retrieve and record information from non-fiction texts	Can you find the part where...? Which part tells you about...?
participate in discussion about both books that are read to them and those they can read themselves, taking turns and listening to what others say	Would you like me to read this page? What did you think of...? I thought that... Do you think... would like this book? What makes you think that?



## Appendix A

### What is inference and why is it so important?

Over the years we've seen many parents stop listening to their children read or reading to their children as soon as they are able to read independently. Assuming reading independently automatically means that children understand everything is a mistake and parents quickly realise this as their children approach 11+ and SATs style reading questions. Investing a few minutes every day asking questions about what your child is reading and how they understand what they've read will help them develop their inference skills.

Inference can be defined as the process of drawing of a conclusion based on the available evidence plus previous knowledge and experience. When reading, children are required to *make an educated guess* about what is happening as the answer will not be stated explicitly. Children must use clues from the text, coupled with their own experiences, to draw a logical conclusion. *This is called reading between the lines.*

The teaching of inference skills is extremely important to our children. It is a higher order skill that is essential for them to be able to access the deepest levels of comprehension. Having a finely tuned ability to infer also has important applications in other subject areas too, particularly Maths and Science. Given the importance of pattern reading in these two subjects, it is no surprise that children will find these skills extremely useful especially when it comes to prediction and evaluation.

### Inference or Deduction?

What's the difference? It could be said that deduction is more factual based, whereas inference has an element of guessing based on evidence. For example, if the police find a body in the library with a knife sticking out, the deduction would be that person has been murdered. The inference would be that someone didn't like them. In *Kensuke's Kingdom* for example, when water and food are left beside Michael the deduction is that someone else lives on the island. The inference is that they care for Michael, but don't want him to know anything about them. Inferring is figuring out what the author wants



you to think. For example, in *Snow White*, the author plants clues to infer that the witch is a bad character. There's plenty of evidence to support this inference; she speaks harshly to mirrors; she is horrified when she isn't considered 'fairest in the land'; she is so evil she plans to kill off Snow White with a poisoned apple. There is no need for the author to explicitly state that 'the witch is an evil character.' It is all done through inference.



### How Parents Can Help With Inference Skills

In Reading, Games, Conversations...

- Ask "What do you think?" and "What did you notice?" when you are reading or talking.

- Explain that we make inferences all day long, not just when reading. Encourage a conversation with your child about this. "The sky is cloudy,

what do you think is going to happen?" "That child in the park is crying and her dad looks cross. What could have happened?"

- Model your own behind-the-scenes thinking: this technique is called a 'think-aloud'. For example, "How do you know the princess is sad?" When your child replies, ask "What clues helped you figure that out? Show me the words."

- Similarly, when they have used context to puzzle out the meaning of an unknown word, ask "What helped you figure that out?"

- Build inference skills with quick word games like twenty questions: children try to guess the identity of a mystery person or thing by asking questions – if they can't guess, the asker gets a point.

- Predict what the next page will hold; explain why you think so. Let the child agree or not and defend his position.

- Think about the author's intention i.e. why have they chosen the words 'inky, black sky'? *To create atmosphere, but to also show how very dark it is.*

- Invest in wordless picture books such as those found in the link below and encourage your child to infer the story from the images.

<https://clpe.org.uk/library-and-resources/booklists/wordless-picture-books>

## Let's practise!

### Exercise 1

Billy was crying. His whole day was spoilt. All his hard work had been broken by the wave. His mother came to stop him crying. But she accidentally trod on the only tower that was left. Billy cried even more. "Never mind," said his mother, "You can always build another one tomorrow." Billy stopped crying and went home for his tea.



- How do we know where this is taking place?
- Why is Billy crying?
- Why is it easy to build one tomorrow?
- What time was it?

### Example 2



Alesha had won the final of the dance contest and the audience's cheers brought her to the stage for an encore. "Every step she takes is so perfect and graceful," Cheri said grudgingly, as she watched Alesha dance.

Reading the speech, what might you infer about how Cheri feels about Alesha?

### Example 3

He placed his hand firmly on her back and ushered her hurriedly out the door. "Yes, yes, yes. I will call you soon to set up another meeting. I will!" George said, punctuating the end of his sentence with a firmly shut door."

Looking at his actions and speech what can you infer about George and the person he is talking to?

