

Talking Matters

www.talkingmatters.com.au Ph: 8255 7137
 Helping your child to reach their potential



Goal: Reading skills for children

To develop strategies for basic reading skills, including recognising letters and remembering their sounds.

Reading difficulties are one of the most obvious signs of dyslexia and language based reading difficulties. A child may eventually acquire basic reading skills however, this process is much slower and needs much more support. Reading is a complex process and requires your child to recognise individual letters, remember their sounds, blend these sounds with the other letters and understand this word as part of the sentence.

Teaching commonly used words:

Children with reading difficulties lack automatic word recognition. This means, every word they come across has to be worked out from scratch, each time it is encountered. Common words such as where, here, he, they and the, are the most difficult for them as they are visually similar and have no interesting meaning.

- **Match to sample in view**- Choose five different words, write them out five times each and spread them out on a table. Pick up a card and hold it up for your child to see say: "This card says 'house', can you find another card that says 'house'".
- **Match to sample hidden** – Choose five different words, write them out five times, pick up a card and show it to the child, say "This card says 'who' remember what it looks like because I am going to turn it over" Place the card face down "find another card that says 'who'".
- **Recognise a named word** – Choose five different words, write them out five times and spread them around the table, say "Find me a card which says 'out', find me a word that says 'my'".
- **Read words at sight**- Choose five different words and write them out five times on separate cards, spread them around the table. Point to each word in turn and say "what does this word say?"



At this point your child has developed sight reading of these words play games such as word lotto, word snap, flash cards and matching games to develop automatic recall of the words.

Teaching letters and their sounds:

Learning letters and their sounds is required for successful reading and spelling skills. This skill can be delayed due to poor memory however it is more often due to poor phonological awareness. Before you can teach the link between letters and sounds a child must be able to hear the initial sounds in words. If they are unable to do this, discontinue this activity and teach basic phonological awareness skills.

- **Match** - Have two sets of all the letters you are targeting on separate cards. Hold up a card and give the sound "This is 's', find me another 's'" remember to provide the child with the sound not the name of the letter i.e "sss" not "es".

- **Recognise** - Have multiple sets of different letters you are targeting, and ask your child “find me ‘t’”, this is more difficult as you haven’t provided a sample or its sound to start with.
- **Read**- At this level the child is not given a sample or target sound, instead point to a letter and say “What is the sound of this letter?”
- **Record**- This level does not provide the child with any cues on the letter shapes, instead provide them with a sheet of paper and say “Write down the letter which makes the ‘m’ sound”.

Remember – do not teach letters which sound similar at the same time e.g. ‘s’ and ‘z’ or ‘m’ and ‘n’. Also, do not teach letters which look similar to each other at the same time ‘f’ and ‘t’ or ‘b’ and ‘d’.

Using letter sound rules in reading:

This is a challenging area for children with Dyslexia. It is difficult for them to link the letters with the sounds and string the sounds together to make words. This activity is based on highly structured phonic programs recommended by The International Dyslexia Association.

- **Selecting target words:** Start with easy words and move to more difficult phonic patterns e.g.
 - 1) Three letter words in Consonant + Vowel + Consonant pattern: hot, jam, mud, top.
 - 2) Four letter words where two letters must ‘slide’ together: flag, best, tick
 - 3) Four letter words where two consonants make a new sound: chat, thin, when
 - 4) Four letter words where the vowel and a consonant make a new sound: fowl, warm, corn
 - 5) Four letter words with a final ‘e’: mice, date, kite, made
 - 6) Three and four letter words where two vowels make a new sound: rain, out, loud, meat
 - 7) Silent letters: knee, gnaw, know
 - 8) Five letter words where three letters slide together: strap, scrum, strip, squid.
 - 9) Five to six letter words where four letters make a new sound: fight, dough, nation
 - 10) Longer words that combine two or more of the above patterns: jumper, beach, sprawl, tribe
 - 11) Prefixes, suffixes and compound words: predict, disagree, truthfully
- After you have selected your target words, based on the child’s ability, teach groups of words with the same phonic clusters: ‘pain’, ‘gain’ and ‘rain’.
- Use non-sense words as well as real words to give additional practice and to challenge phonic skills
- Work from shorter to longer words. For example, if you are teaching ‘st’ start with ‘stop’, ‘stir’, and move onto words such as ‘steamer’ and ‘string’.



- **Auditory blending**

Let your child listen to a string of sounds and then ask them to say the word e.g.

Adult: "I am going to say some sounds slowly. You put them together to make a word... m-a-n" Child: "man". If this task is difficult use picture prompts, and ask the child to select the picture you just sounded out.

- **Modelled practice**

Prepare a list of words and provide a model for how you want them to sound out the words, e.g. "c-u-p is cup", do this for all the words in the list, then ask your child to start from the top of the list and do the same e.g. child: "t-a-p is tap".

- **Practice in texts**

Use the strategies above when reading through books and other written text to slowly spell out the words and ask your child to 'blend' the sounds together.

- **'Sound and say' drills**

Consolidate these skills by using flash cards with words and dealing them out and asking the child to reveal their card, sound out the word and 'blend'/say the word as fast as they can. Use time trials and see if they can beat their best score.

- **Contrast similar words**

Write down a list of words which look similar e.g. 'grill' and 'girl' or 'red' and 'read' and say "which one says grill".

Tips to remember:

- A child with reading difficulties can find reading a struggle and a few lines can take a lot of effort. This means they often don't enjoy reading or have the chance to engage in the story of a book. Keep sessions short and frequent, to ensure they don't become resistant to the enjoying reading.
- Visual tracking (ability to follow along a line of print) can be difficult for a child with reading difficulties therefore it can be helpful to place a ruler or piece of paper under the line they are reading.
- Children with reading difficulties can become anxious about reading and take steps to completely avoid the task. Try to make reading time fun, and remember to teach them and not 'test' them all the time.

