Ideas for reading activities at home

Creating a love of reading is one of the most important things we can do to support a child's success in school. Anything that involves speaking and listening will help them to succeed.

1) Play the 'banana' game.

Ask your child to say the word 'banana' as if they were:

Happy Being chased by an elephant

Excited Angry

Scared Surprised

Tired Lying on a sunny beach

Bored On a roller coaster

There are lots of other ways too! This helps children to develop an understanding of their feelings and encourages them to use the expression needed for reading.

Put words into groups

How many different words can they think of that mean 'big' 'walk' 'sleep' 'run' 'small' 'scary etc?' Use a simple thesaurus if needed.

2) Play 'fortunately, unfortunately.' Tell a story between two of you, sentence by sentence. Each sentence must begin with the words

fortunately or **unfortunately**. It might be like the following example.

'One day a fairy princess decided to go looking for berries.'
***'Unfortunately** she fell over and bumped her knee.'*
*'**Fortunately** she had a plaster in her bag'*
***'Unfortunately** the plaster blew away in the wind.'*

And so on…

3) Play 'would you rather.' It is best to begin with the adult asking the questions. Ask children questions such as:

'Would you rather be a child or an adult?'

'Would you rather be a pig or a goat?'

'Would you rather have sausages for fingers or spaghetti for hair?'

The most important part of this game is asking the 'why' question. 'Why would you rather be a goat?' This will encourage the children to explain, which is a crucial skill for them to learn. Once the children gain confidence, they might ask you the question.

4) Tell a story between you. Each person begins a new sentence. Children will learn a lot about the way a story is structured through this game. Whilst you are playing, encourage them to use rich description.

5) Visit your local public library, and as early as possible, get your child a library card. Talk to them about how you would choose a book. Look at the 'blurb' on the back that tells you what the book is about.

- If you and your child don't enjoy reading a particular book, put it away and pick up another one.
- Keep in mind that your child's reading level and listening level are different. When you read easy books, beginning readers will soon be reading along with you. When you read more advanced books, you encourage a love of stories, and you build the motivation that transforms children into lifelong readers.

8) It's important to read to your child, but equally important to listen to them read to you. Children thrive on having someone appreciate their developing skills.

You might:

- Take turns. You read a paragraph and ask your child to read the next one or you read half the page and your child reads the other half. As your child becomes more at ease with reading aloud, take turns reading a full page. Keep in mind that your child may be focusing more on how to read the words than what they mean, and your reading helps to keep the story alive.

- If your child has trouble reading words, you can help him or her in several ways:
    - Ask the child to skip over the word, read the rest of the sentence, and then say what would make sense in the story for the missing word.
    - Guide them to use what he or she knows about letter sounds.
    - Supply the correct word and then read that sentence again.

  Listening to your child read aloud provides opportunities for you to express appreciation of his or her new skills and for them to practice their reading. Most importantly, this is another way to enjoy reading together.

  9) Make sure you have time to talk. Talking allows your child to develop the vocabulary they need when reading.

- Tell your child stories about your parents, grandparents or them as a child. You might even put these stories in a book and add old family photographs.
- Remember together what happened on special days, such as holidays, birthdays, and family holidays.
- Tell stories about when you were little. Describe things that happened at school involving teachers. Talk about your brothers, sisters, or friends.
- Write a holiday journal with your child to create a new family story. Recording the day's events and pasting the photographs into the journal ties the family story to a written record. You can include everyday trips like going to the shops or the park.

- It helps for children to know that stories come from real people and are about real events. When children listen to stories, they hear the voice of the storyteller. This helps them hear the words when they learn to read aloud or read silently.

10) Other ideas:

Make up silly rhymes together. Identify which words rhyme.

Describe things – 'Here is your scrumptious, tasty dinner!' 'Jump into your comfortable, snug bed!' Try and introduce words your child does not know.

Use alliteration to describe people in the family – **D**ancing **D**ora or **S**tunning **S**tella etc.

Write messages to your child. Put them in their lunchbox, under their plate or on their pillow. This makes reading purposeful for them.

Write simple lists for children to read. You might do this on a shopping trip or it could be things they have to find for you around the house. You could draw pictures by the words to support them if needed.