Reading with children is fun and one of the best ways to help prepare your child for school. Children learn about the value and importance of reading as they watch their family reading and writing in everyday life. Whether reading a novel, sharing a story, using a recipe, making a shopping list, writing a birthday card or reading a street sign, children observe the value of reading and writing.

The magic of language
One of the keys in learning to read is exposure to literature. Most libraries have guides for recommended literature suitable for children of different ages and grades. These may help you choose books that will introduce your child to the magic of literary language.

You may also want to borrow books with audio. This will help your child learn to track the words on the page as they are being read. You can teach this skill yourself by pointing to the words in a book as you are reading aloud. Listening to stories develops your child’s vocabulary and exposes them to experiences beyond their immediate environment.

What you can do at home
1. Be yourself and involve your child in everyday conversations from an early age.
2. Read aloud to your child. It will help your child to learn the language of books and encourages enjoyment of books and reading.
3. Talk about books together - make reading a shared, enjoyable activity.
4. See that there is a range of reading material for your child at home, both fiction and non-fiction. Allow times for your child to read by themselves.
5. Read to your child in your first language - research shows that using your first language will help your child when he or she learns to read English.
6. Try not to let television intrude on reading time - set aside some uninterrupted time to read with your child. This helps to establish homework routines for future years.
7. Listen to your child read every day, even if only for a short time and even if it is the same book. Familiar reading allows children to practice their reading skills.
8. Give books as treats and presents. Talk about why reading is important in life.
9. Discuss the meanings of stories and words. Talk about the different words with similar meanings e.g. shopping centre/mall, highway/ freeway/ motorway
10. Join your local library. Borrow books for yourself as well as your child. It is important that your child continues to read during school holidays.

Further information
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In English students learn to read, write, talk and listen. Children learn about literature and how language varies according to context and how to communicate to a range of audiences for different purposes. They learn to read for information and for pleasure.

In Kindergarten children begin developing reading and comprehension skills, e.g. recognise simple sightwords, recognise most sounds of the alphabet, use illustrations and picture clues to make predictions about stories when reading.

What teachers do at school

At school teachers group children of similar reading ability together for more specific teaching. This is usually called 'guided reading'. Teachers can use this time to focus on skills to teach each child based on their needs.

At school, children are expected to re-read stories by themselves or with friends. This is usually called 'independent reading' or 'familiar reading'.

Reading instruction at school

Before Reading

When teachers introduce a new book they ask the children to look at the title and cover, think about what the book might be about and what they already know that might be related to the story. This prepares children for reading by activating their 'background knowledge'. It is important that children are allowed time to look at the visual information in books.

During Reading

Children are encouraged to take responsibility for their learning by holding the book, turning the pages and reading the book themselves. If a child comes to a word they don't know the teacher will pause, allowing 5-10 seconds for the child to think about how they might solve the problem.

If the child needs assistance the teacher will offer a prompt or a hint, such as:

- Look at the pictures;
- Think of a word that makes sense and looks like the word;
- Look at the first 3 sounds and go back and read the sentence again; and,
- Read to the end of the sentence, then come back and think about what the word might be.

After Reading

Praise children for their effort and application in taking responsibility for their learning.

As the parent of a primary school student you will want to know what your child is learning so you can help them along at home. You and your child’s teachers will be the most important influence on your son or daughter’s education.

This information is provided to help you follow your child’s early reading development and to help you talk with teachers about day to day classroom activities and your child’s progress.