

# Making Books part of growing up

## Taking the first steps towards independent reading

As children get to school age most will start to want to do the same things adults do - and that includes reading for themselves. Some will take to it very early on, while others need a bit longer to get past the 'reading aloud' stage. Recognising this, Egmont publishes a range of Banana books for this age group which split into three categories: books for first readers, books for developing readers and books for newly fluent readers. For more details about the Banana range see page 30.

At this age children really start to explore a huge variety of books and start developing their own interests and tastes. Whether it's the humour of *Flat Stanley* or the familiarity of *Thomas the Tank Engine*, books for these ages help to develop a child's vocabulary. You'd be amazed how many five year olds can talk about train sidings and shunting carriages!

## Getting the reading habit

One way that you can help to nourish a love of books is to let children see how much you enjoy reading - whether it's books, newspapers or magazines - and to encourage them to read every day, even if it's just for a few minutes, rather than having a haphazard routine.

You can of course also vary things a little by getting older siblings, grandparents and friends involved. Sitting with a child who is beginning to read is a lovely thing to do, so most of the adults you know will be happy to do it, although a little bribery may be needed for older siblings!

**'I like making up the voices'**

Amelie, age 7



## Take the 'five finger' reading test

Once children start to read for themselves, there's a simple way to decide if a particular book is right for them. Take him or her along to a bookshop and try this simple process:

**Step one.** Pick out a book that looks like it might be of a suitable type.

**Step two.** Turn to a random page and get the child to read.

**Step three.** For each word they can't read or don't understand, put up one finger.

**Step four.** If you get to the end of the page with more than five fingers extended it means the book might be too difficult. Five fingers or fewer means the book is likely to be suitable.

Of course, it's OK to choose a book that is a bit more challenging than a 'five finger' book, but make sure you will be around to read it aloud or together, helping out with the new words as they come along.

## Creative ways to get children reading

**Sometimes children don't automatically take to spending time with books, so a little creativity might be needed to encourage them to develop their reading ability.**

**Have fun at the library.** A trip to the library can be a fun outing for children to enjoy. They can spend time looking through a huge range of books and there is no need to rush, which is often the case when choosing books to buy in a shop. Librarians should also be able to offer helpful advice and recommendations if you're struggling to find suitable books.

**Turn reading into part of a bigger experience.** If they love a book on dinosaurs can you take them to a museum with a dinosaur exhibition, or rent a dinosaur DVD?

**Play games that are reading related.** There are tons of fun spelling games like Alpha-Bug Soup and Junior Scrabble, as well as ones where reading cards or squares on the board is part of the game.

**Get interactive.** It's almost impossible to get away from the internet and whilst it can't replace the experience of reading a physical book don't dismiss it out of hand.

There are loads of websites created especially for kids (CBeebies for example) and you can also buy 'Flip' games that turn the Nintendo DS into an interactive book, complete with on-screen pages to turn.

**Use daily life as opportunities for some reading.** Get children involved in reading while planning a trip to the cinema or your family holiday. Keep an eye out too for the many daily opportunities for reading such as menus, road signs, shop displays and posters.

Making these different options part of a wider reading experience can be beneficial, particularly for reluctant readers. They can make reading seem more fun, and more interactive.