

Reading: Age 8–9 (Year 4)

In Year 4, your child will be developing into an increasingly fluent reader. The focus will now be on building comprehension, but it is still important that children use their phonics skills to tackle new words.

There are a variety of simple things you can do at home to support your child's developing reading skills.

Read on to find out how your child will learn to read at school and how you can help at home.

How to help at home

There are plenty of simple and effective ways you can help your child with reading in Year 4. Here are our top tips.

1. Listen to your child reading *and* read to your child

At this age, your child might prefer to read independently and it's tempting to leave them to it. But listening to them read is still a worthwhile thing to do. This way, you can help your child with any unfamiliar words and can talk to them about the book to make sure that they understand.

Reading to them is still important too. Reading to your child means that they will be able to hear books they might not yet be able to read themselves. Sharing and talking about books is also a lovely way to spend time together!

2. Value your child's choices

It's really important to value your child's choices, even when a book looks too easy or too difficult. Children can often read books that initially appear to be too difficult (especially if it is a topic that interests them).

That said, you will probably need to guide them through pictures, tricky words, ideas, or even the layout of an information book. At this age, children will often have strong enough word-reading skills to read most books they choose, but that doesn't mean that they can always understand the text.

3. Open up the world of reading

Help your child to read widely. Books, magazines, websites, and apps all show how reading can help you to follow your interests and get involved. Show your child websites, books, and magazines that link to their hobbies – whether it's swimming, football, dance, music, art, or something else entirely. Always check that any websites children access are safe, and monitor their use of them.

4. Make a word bookmark

Using a piece of paper as a bookmark, encourage your child to jot down words they don't understand. They can do this when they read on their own or if you're reading together and they don't want to stop. After reading, try looking up the words together in a dictionary and talk about what they mean.

5. Read for a purpose

As well as reading for pleasure, your child is likely to need to read for particular purposes in Year 4. They will read to find information, to learn about something, or to answer questions. Practising this can be useful for success at school.

Your child may be asked to investigate a topic or find answers to questions set in class. You can help them with their research skills by talking about where to look to find the answers, although you may need to remind them to look in books and use the library as well as the internet. Children can struggle with information overload so they need your help to 'search and sift' both sites and information to make decisions.

6. Don't give up!

As your child reads more difficult books, there might be times when they struggle and may be reluctant to continue. You can help them through those patches by reading a bit with them to get them started or hooked into the next chapter. Always balance this with sensitivity and valuing their choice – it's got to be fun!