

Pause, Prompt... Praise



At a glance

You may have already heard of **Pause, Prompt Praise** or **the 3Ps** as it is sometimes called. These three catchy words, *Pause, Prompt Praise* describe a simple technique that, used well, will support your child to practise his/her reading and to develop more reading confidence.

The principle of *Pausing* – then *Prompting* – and then *Praising* is very useful to remember and apply anytime your child is reading aloud to you.

Teachers and trained tutors often use a more structured version of this principle but the following tips can help you to try out it when reading with your child at home.

The 3Ps technique is best used when your child is reading and ‘gets stuck’ on words that they can’t read or are new to them.

When your child encounters words that are difficult for them to read, the 3Ps technique will allow him/her the opportunity to have another go, self-correct, or if needed, find out (be told) what the problem word is.

Introduction

Two important things to remember from the outset when using the 3Ps:

- The goal of reading is to understand (make sense) of what is read, so always keep this in mind when you are *prompting* and *praising* your child.
- Try to ensure that you are relaxed, interested and supportive, which in turn, will help your child feel OK when they make mistakes or just can’t work out a word and need to be told what it is.

At home this technique will work best when your child is reading a text that is well-matched to their reading level, that is, where your child can easily read most of the words in the text and only falters on occasional words.

Before reading

- Make sure that you are both comfortable and can clearly see the text your child is reading.
- Talk about the book making connections between you, other books/shows/movies and the world. This will help provide a context.

Pause,

Once your child starts reading aloud carefully follow the text as they read.

If (or when) your child comes to a word they don’t know try not to jump in straight away and supply the correct word. Wait and give your child time to work out the word.

In the first instance ‘pausing’ creates an opportunity for your child to try and self-correct or work out the word for him/herself.

Prompt...

If your child successfully supplies the word they have stumbled over it’s a good idea to suggest that he/she goes back to the beginning of the sentence and re-reads the whole sentence again (to recap meaning) before reading on.

If your child has not independently worked out the problem word, at this point you may intervene and prompt them with some quick, low-key suggestions about what they could do.

Say things like:

- *Try reading on for a sentence or two, miss out the difficult word and see if that helps you to work it out what it is.*
- *Look at the sound the word begins with, use that clue and think about what might make sense here. Look at the pictures and see if they give you a clue to what the word might be.*
- *Box the parts of the word with your fingers to break it into recognisable chunks, e.g. find a smaller word or the base in a word, find the ‘th’ in that, now find the ‘at’.*
- *Go back to the beginning of the sentence, re-read it and have another go at working it out.*

- If prompts like these are not working, this is the point at which you simply tell your child the correct word. After a short time 'prompting' say:
- *Would you like me to help you? or How about I tell you the word?*

You may even briefly explain the meaning of the word but then quickly prompt your child to continue reading.

Try not to spend too much time prompting as your child will find it difficult to maintain the overall meaning of what they are reading. In other words let them read the book.

Praise

This is the easiest part of the process for any parent because it's something that comes naturally. Praise your child's reading efforts and successes whenever you think it is appropriate during the reading process.

As well as praising their effort it is often good to tell them why and not dwell on the mistakes. For example you might say:

- *Well done, I thought it was very clever the way that you went back, re-read the sentence from the beginning and worked out that word you were having trouble with.*
- *That was great reading tonight, I know I had to tell you a few words but you also worked out some pretty tricky ones for yourself. Well done.*

General tips and comments

Teaching kids to read is a team effort

Teachers recognize the important role parents, caregivers and members of the community can play in helping children learn to read.

The research shows that what families, teachers and community programs do makes a difference, especially when they work together to ensure that every child learns to read. It is our shared responsibility.

Reading for enjoyment

Make time to read with your children. A mixture of reading to and with them as well as listening to them read is important. Make it part of the daily routine and choose a place that is comfortable and away from distractions.

Reading needs to be a successful and enjoyable experience for the children. It is not a test. If children find reading too difficult they will not enjoy the process and more than likely want to give up.

How do children learn?

Most children start kindergarten with great literacy skills. They are generally aware of books and the print that is on them and they usually have a good spoken vocabulary.

Teachers understand that children learn best when they can connect their learning with what they already know (Zone of Proximal Development- working from the known to the unknown). Teachers will use the children's knowledge of spoken vocabulary to make links with the written words of a text to build knowledge.

What is a levelled reading text?

Teachers use reading resources that are scaled or levelled in difficulty. These levels range from 1 to 30+. These texts have a vocabulary of most high frequency words which are supported by illustrations. As children are exposed to more of these texts they begin to build a basic sight word knowledge that they can transfer from book to book.

How do teachers decide what text to send home?

Teachers will select a text that the children will be able to read with 90-95% accuracy. By doing this the teacher knows that the text will be challenging but with support the children will be able to cope.

The children will nearly always have had an orientation of the text and have read the text before it has been sent home so that it is familiar to them.

Familiar texts- why do we send home the home reader? Why not a different home reader?

The parents/carers role in helping their children learn to read is to provide a time to practise their reading skills and strategies in a safe, fun and enjoyable way. By the time the children have brought home a book to read they should have already

become a familiar with it at school. This makes the text a little less challenging and takes the pressure off the adult to be the teacher.

This is where the parent uses the pause, prompt & praise strategy. Sending a new, unseen text home more difficult and can cause stress on the reader and changes the role of the parent/caregiver to teacher rather than supporter/guide.

Practising Reading

Parents/caregivers can double the amount of reading done on a familiar text in one week from a possible 5 times to 10 times. As the text becomes more familiar the children are not problem solving hard words in the text anymore but are beginning to read the text with fluency and phrasing.

As the text becomes more familiar they will be noticing the spelling and sound patterns that make up words and the language conventions (punctuation & grammar) that the text uses which they can apply to the next text that they read. But most importantly they will be gaining meaning (reading comprehension).

Book Talk

At the end of the book spend some time talking about the book. What you liked or disliked and what you both thought and felt about it. Make links to the text, self and world.

If your child is starting to read the book from memory (not looking at the words) at the end of the text you can play some searching games like:

- Find me the page where... (comprehension)
- Find the sentence, word, part of the word, full stop (punctuation)
- Find sight words and spelling words

Ask your child to use their pointer fingers to indicate or box the word or parts of the word that you want them to find.

How do I help my child choose an independent text for them to read?

The greatest motivators for a child when choosing a book to read are interest in the theme or topic and the ability to read the book successfully.

Gaining interest is a matter of knowing what your child likes, knowing good authors and illustrators (talk to the librarian or bookshop owners or other parents) and read the blurb and the first couple of pages to them. If you can get your child hooked on a series all the better.

Secondly being able to read and understand the book is vital. Remember to be considered fluent a child needs to have a success rate of 96% and above. You can use the five finger test to work this out. Ask your child to read about 100 words and every time they make an error without correction put down a finger. If you put down five fingers within those 100 words then the book is probably too hard.

If your child is desperate to read a book that is too difficult you can read it to them or you may be able to access the book on CD or download it. Children who are struggling to read will still enjoy being enveloped in a good story.