



Ways to Help Your Child Read

By Emily Beckloff



Introduction

It can be absolutely impossible to get younger school age children to sit down and focus on their reading. They try to wiggle out of it, grumble and whine...it's painful for everyone!

I remember struggling and never being able to remember what the start of the word was by the time I'd got to the end of it, let alone the sentence as a whole. Even when children *can* read, it can be an ongoing struggle to get them to read books at their level (or slightly higher) and not resort to the easier ones...or read at all in fact.

Our middle child refused to read anything other than picture books for ages. He didn't want to bother with reading at all in fact, he just wanted to look at the pictures! Our nine year old daughter found learning to read much easier, but she will still even now, only read a book if she likes the look of the cover and it's not 'too dark, too gloomy or too boring'.

So, what can you do to encourage children who can read but prefer not to? How can you get them over that 'hump', and on to wanting to snuggle down with a good book?

First Things First...

Not all children take to reading and it's important to understand why, so you can do something about it. The first thing to do is to speak to their teacher and ask what reading level they're at and if they've noticed any particular difficulties that you can help them with at home.

If you're not sure how you can help, ask the teacher for some ideas. Do they struggle with certain letter combinations, certain words or types of words? Get as much detail as you can. The more you can do at home, the quicker your child will progress on to the 'finding it easier' stage and be closer to the wanting to read for pleasure.

Before I talk about ways to encourage your child to read, if they're very young in their reading career or have specific difficulties, there are lots of fun ideas and games you can plan to help them.

An on-line search for 'learning to read games' will find stacks of free age-appropriate resources.

You could also try these:

- **Pick a letter or word** and see how many times they can spot it on a page, paragraph or in the whole book.
- **Word (or letter) matching games**, which also works well for those impossible to read 'sight words'. Print out the words (or letters) they find hard to read in duplicate, cut them out and lay them face down on the floor. Like with all memory games, if you can find a matching pair you get to keep it. The winner (or loser) gets a tickle until they beg for mercy!
- **Read words when you're out and about**. They're everywhere: road signs, food labels, road signs, shopping bags, road markings, shop names...anything and everything. **It can all be under the pretence of challenging your eye-sight and your ability to read with one eye closed!**

'It's Boring'

How many times have you heard this?? It's because they're finding it hard and it *is* hard.

Make a time where reading is the most attractive option!

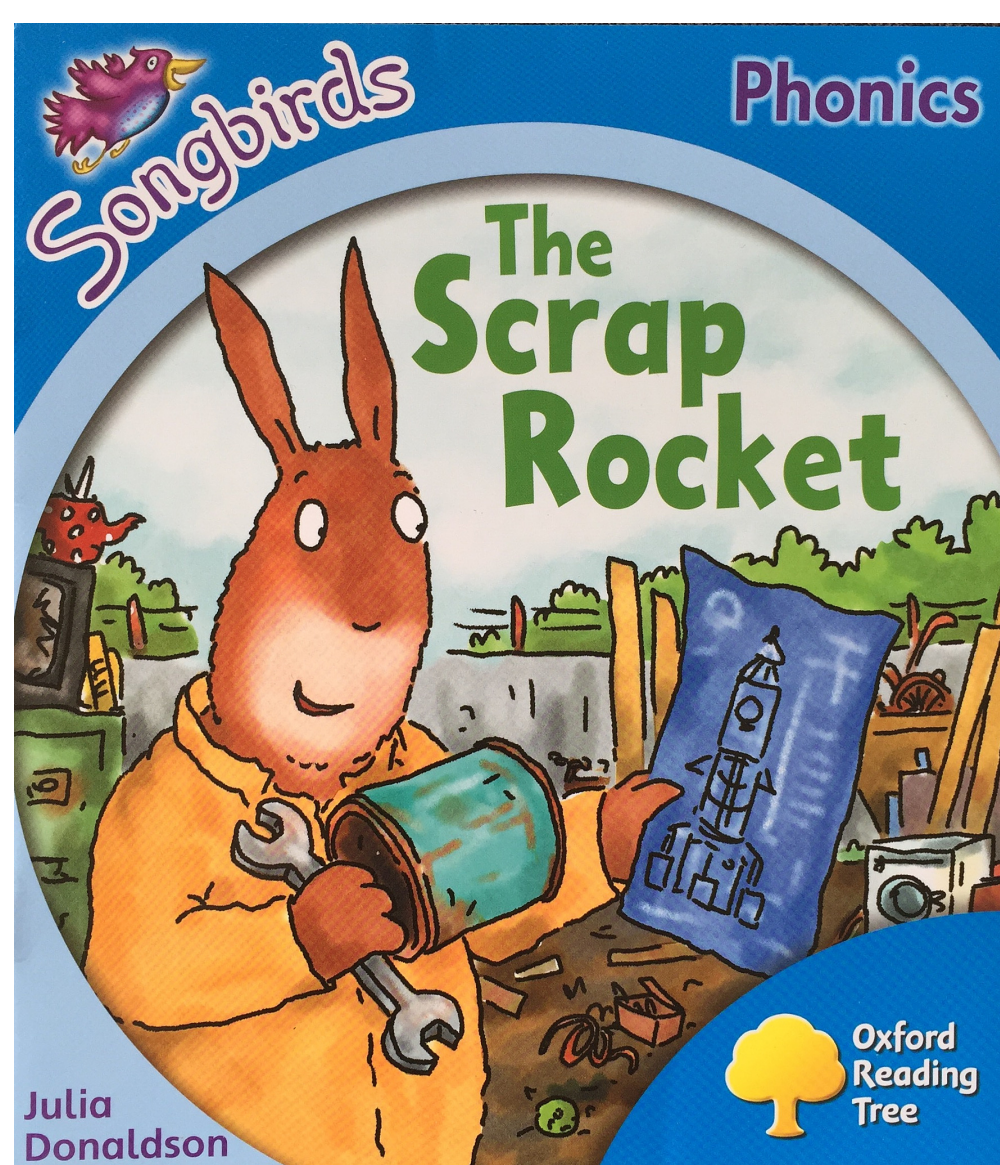
I have a great tip for this one. From a young age, we've always put the kids to bed forty five minutes before they need go to sleep. They have to stay in bed with no playing or messing about. They can either:

- a) go straight to sleep or
- b) read

Guess which one they choose??

They have clip-on LED lights so they can see properly without the whole room being lit up like a ship at night. They also take a proper interest in the books we get from the library because they want their self-directed reading time to be interesting. If there's any threat to this time for any reason, such as a late night out, they get really upset!

Guide them towards books with very simple text to start with if needs be. You want them to have a go at reading in bed while you're not there, and gain confidence in their own ability. A fantastic series of books for this is the '**Oxford Reading Tree Songbirds Phonics Collection**'...



You can buy them singly or, for a vast discount, the full collection of 36 books. They're mixed level, so some have very simple text and they're all very short and easy. They're perfect for flicking through and having a go at reading by yourself as well as enjoying as your reading improves.

Books to recommend as they get more confident, include: [Roald Dahl](#), the [Ottoline](#) series, [Tom Gates](#), [Diary of a Wimpy Kid](#), [How To Train Your Dragon](#), [Goth Girl](#), [The Dragonsitter](#), [David Walliams](#), [Horrid Henry](#), [13-Storey Treehouse](#), [Sea Quest / Beast quest](#) and so on. There are SO many great books out there.

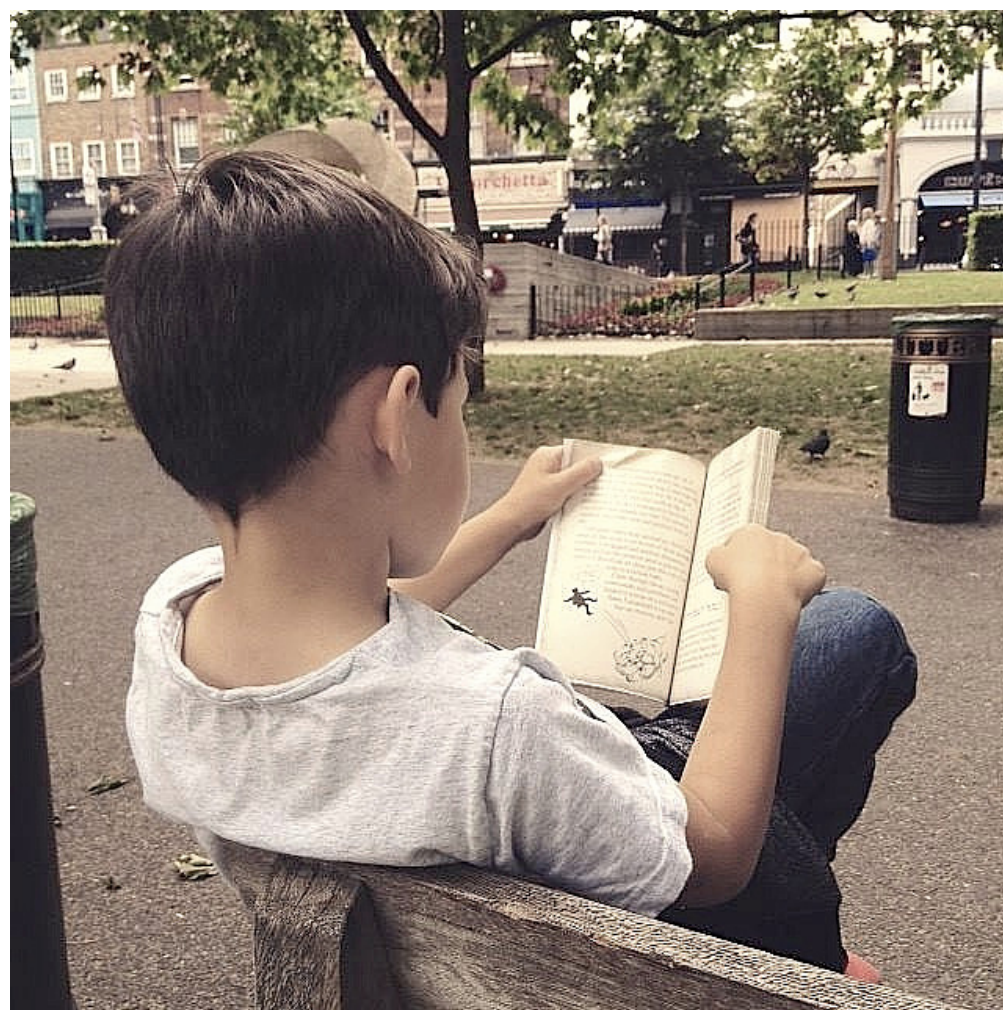
Appeal to children's natural love of all things silly and gross...

All children seem to love the silly, funny or gross side of life. For readers thinking about chapter books, [The Disgusting Adventures of Fleabag Monkeyface](#) might go down well, as the series in general is quite disgusting and gross. There are also plenty of books on 'disgusting facts', which will also no doubt appeal to many.

Give them a monthly book allowance...

This is such lovely thing to do, kids love it and it doesn't need to be expensive! I personally prefer to take the kids and their money to charity shops or second hand book shops.

The important thing however you do it, is that it forms a special occasion, where buying something to read is the extra reward at the end. Whenever we do this, the kids are usually really anxious to get on and read their new books, so we often just find somewhere to sit and have a read!



Ask friends and relatives to send a letter...

...but in their clearest writing! Children absolutely love getting letters. It makes them feel special and has almost the same anticipatory excitement of opening a present.

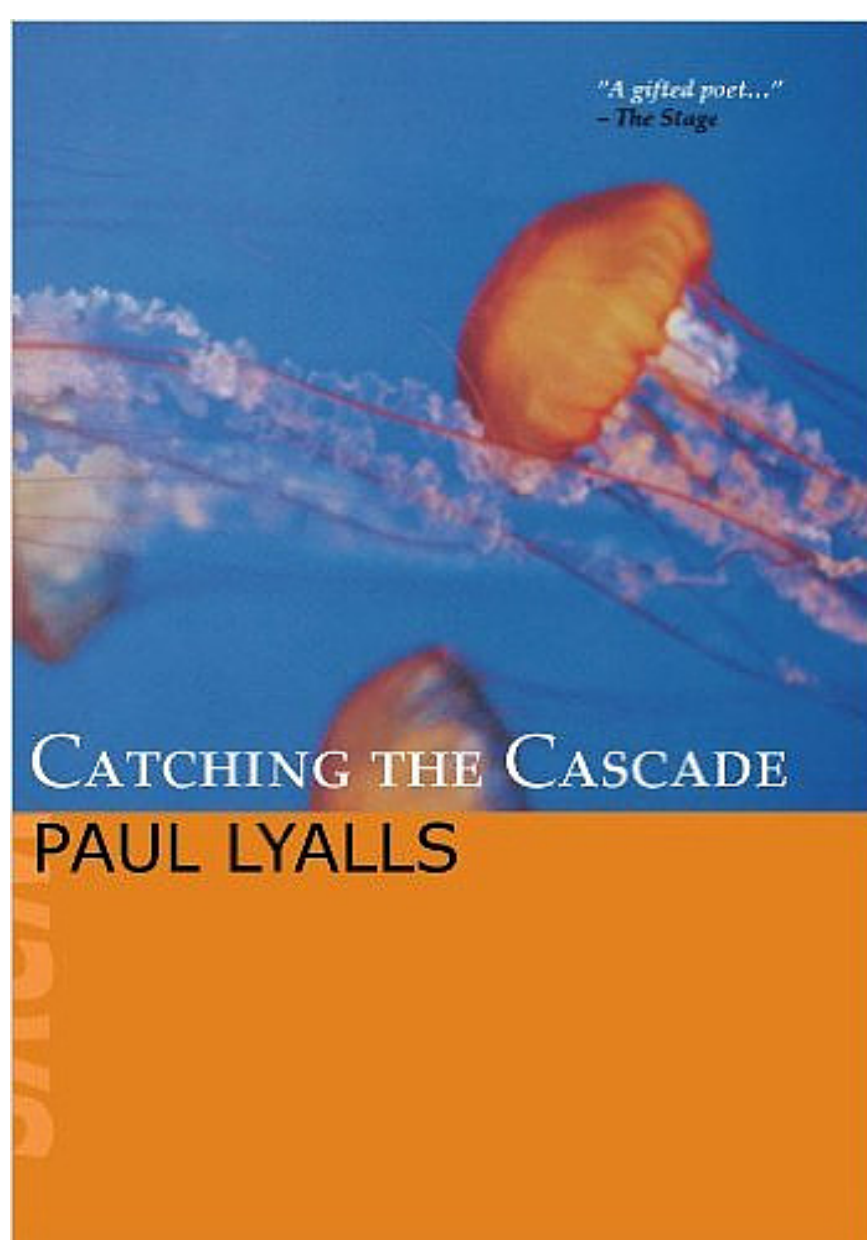
Who is it from? What does it say?

Emails too cause great excitement!

Poetry (that isn't boring)...

How about poetry?? Lovely bite sized pieces of text that needn't be sensible or long! Limericks are a hot favourite with kids, as they're usually silly and very easy to remember.

There's a very talented children's poet called Paul Lyalls, who writes the most silly and hilarious poems. One that sticks in my mind is about sausages, which have a bottom at each end. He's brilliantly funny live and the kids shriek when he reads his poems out. His book 'Catching The Cascade' is perfect for bed time reading and is jam packed with funnies and sillies. We love it a lot.



Comic style books

Our middle boy was a very reluctant reader at the start, but loved flicking through comics because the images told him all he needed to know and there's relatively little text! I got some [Superhero Comic Books](#) from the library, which worked a treat and so he moved up a rung on the reading ladder. The [Ninjago Masters of Spinjitzu](#) series is also a good one if you want another recommendation. Sometimes it's just too overwhelming to go straight into plain text and they love the comic style illustrations and sketches in books such as [Tom Gates](#), [16-Storey Treehouse](#), or [Diary of a Wimpy Kid](#) series'.

Magazines

Don't forget there are so many great magazines out there and not just the ones they had when they were pre-schoolers. You know...the ones where they'd simply die outright if they didn't have the toy stuck to the front of it. They could buy magazines as part of their 'book allowance', get a subscription for the birthday or Christmas, or borrow them from the library!

[Whizz Pop Bang!](#) is a fantastic science magazine in case you're after a sciencey recommendation. Otherwise a search for 'Kids' Magazines' will yield quite a selection.

Book & Webpage Browsing on the Internet

Our kids LOVE anything to do with the internet and they get very excited about book browsing on the much cheaper sites: [Books & Pieces](#), [The Book Depository](#) and [The Book People](#). They love looking things up to do with their homework too. Our middle child has an incredible magnetic pull to screens and will read anything if it's on a device of some sort. Try mixing the pull of screen-time with reading and you could be on to a winner!

Ask [them](#) for book recommendations...

Take an interest in their books, ask them if they'd recommend them, read them yourself and tell others about them. Children love to see they've been heard, that their opinion counts and to see people taking action on their recommendations. Ours automatically give me a verbal review on books they've really enjoyed and they're getting really good at them!

Topics of interest...

If you're planning a family activity, going on holiday, or on a day trip somewhere, visiting friends or family in other parts of the country, go to the library and borrow a book on the area or the activity you're planning or pop into a local bookshop for a browse. Children get very interested in reading about somewhere they're about to go, or somewhere where they've been. They generally ask lots of questions too, which is a great conversation starter.

Reading out instructions or directions!

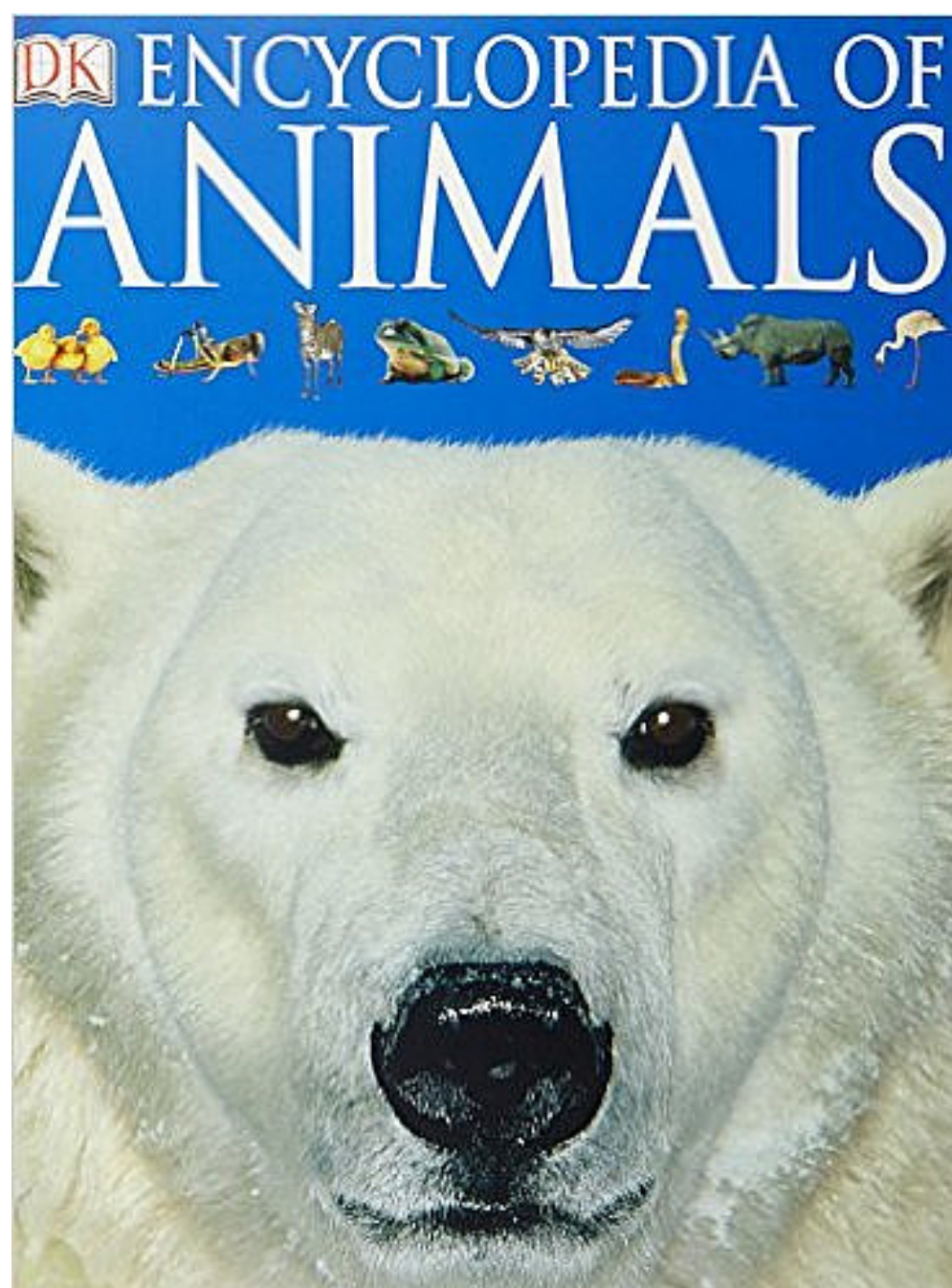
If you're doing an activity that requires some instructions, such as cooking, building something or going somewhere. Ask your reluctant reader to be in charge of the map and reading out the directions, reading out any instructions or guiding you both through the recipe. Words are everywhere and children love to feel involved and have a responsible job.

'It's too hard and there's no point'

Ours have definitely said this. Numerous times!
The key thing here is to think about how can you make it more interesting for them and to show them what they can gain by reading. Make them [want](#) to know what the words say...

Read Non-Fiction Books Together...

Non-fiction books offer a completely different experience to fiction books. We have a really lovely [Animal Encyclopedia](#) for example, which has incredible images and is full of facts that make the kids' eyes stick out on stalks when they hear them. This is it...



We curl up on the sofa and look through it together, and before the kids could read themselves, they'd badger me to read out the facts and figures. They knew the key to finding out the gruesome and wondrous facts about each animal, was held locked in the words. Suddenly, the words were far more interesting than the pictures!

'What does that say Mum? Can you read it out?' What about that one?

We had fun, we had bonding time, we learnt and the reluctant reader at the time could really see how reading could be a good thing.

On-line Photo Books

These can be really motivating. You could make an on-line photo book for the family, or for each child, using your own photos of things that are meaningful to the child and adding your own captions. Children are very vain and love seeing themselves in print, so a book all about them is a truly wonderful thing! Captions can be as simple or as complicated as you like. One company we've reviewed and would recommend is: '[Love 2 Read](#)'.

Match Your Child's Interests!

It's important to keep on top of your child's interests and choose books they actually like, not ones you think they'll like, ones they used to like or ones they should like. There are books and web pages about everything in this world: climbing trees, tea parties, how to look after dogs, hairstyles, superheroes, easy science experiments...get stuck in!

Do ask your local library to recommend books or styles of books based on your child's interests, and ask people on social media what their children are enjoying. Don't forget non-fiction books! Children love learning about the world around us and [a book on the world's deadliest animals](#) or [how astronaut food is made](#) for example, should go down a treat.

Give them their own library cards...

Kids love to be in charge and 'responsible'. They love having their own library card and being in charge of booking their own books in and out.

You might need to check they haven't gone for something totally unsuitable, but leave the rest of it up to them. They will rise to the occasion.

Be a good reading role model...

Share your reading experiences with the kids. Tell them about the fun things you've read in the day.

We all read interesting things - either in the newspaper, a magazine, on the internet, on social media... tell your kids what you've read and they'll soon want to hear more from you. It's important they realise there's more to read than what's in their school books. Reading gives you access to all sorts in the big wide world!

I hope you enjoyed my little e-book and found some helpful tips along the way. I feel very passionate about inspiring children to read and once they start reading for pleasure, they begin not only begin to learn a huge amount more, but their wonderful imaginations can really nourish and grow.

Our children are wonderful stories themselves, just waiting to unfurl...

About Me



My name is Emily Beckloff and I'm a Christmas mad Mum to three young kids, the youngest of whom has Down's Syndrome. I'm the CEO and Founder of the International Elf Service, which is the leading provider of news from the North Pole. I'm also a Registered Osteopath and we live in London with our cat, Trumpet.

Pet hate: people being knowingly unkind

Emily x