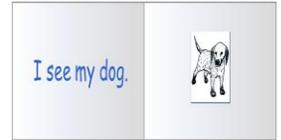


My child brings books home to practice reading. But, she has already memorized some of them! What should I do?

Children at the earliest stages of learning to read have a lot to learn about how print works. They need to learn things such as: in English, print goes from left to right, spaces tell us where one word ends and the next one begins, letters in printed words stand for sounds in spoken words, and so on. Teachers often use very simple books to help children develop these basic understandings. These books tend to follow a pattern, with many of the same words on each page (See the mouse, See the pig, etc.). The word that changes from page to page is signaled by the picture. These books allow children to focus their attention on learning and practicing some of the basic concepts about print without having to struggle to puzzle out all of the words.



When listening to your child read such books, keep the purposes of the books in mind. Focus on helping your child to point to each word as it is said. This will help your child to develop a “concept of word” and to understand that, for each word she says, there is a corresponding word on the page. Having your child point to the words as she says them will also make it more likely that she will begin to learn some of the **high frequency** words in the book (*the, is, like, and, was, of, etc.*).



Note:

High frequency words are words that occur very, very often in both spoken language and written materials. Teachers sometimes call these words “sight words” because it is so important for readers to be able to read these words quickly and correctly when they see them.



Children who are being asked to read books that follow a pattern are, generally, not ready to “sound out” words completely. In fact, for the earliest books they bring home, they may not be ready to use the letter sounds at all. However, **if** your child is beginning to learn letter sounds, you can encourage her to use what she knows to keep her place while reading. For example, if she knows the sound of the letter M, and she is looking at the word “mouse” in her book, you might encourage her to think about the picture and about what the first sound in the word will be.

In reading these beginner books with your child, it is also important to take every opportunity to talk about the story – which will often be told through the pictures.

On occasion, parents report that they have tried covering the pictures in these beginner books and/or have asked their children to start at the end of the book and read the book backwards. These practices can confuse children about the print concepts that these books are designed to help teach. Further, such practices are likely to frustrate children and may interfere with their reading progress.