HOW TO HELP A CHILD WORK OUT UNKNOWN WORDS

WAIT

SAY... I didn’t understand that

PAUSE

Give a prompt about sounds or a meaning clue

PAUSE

Model self-correction by re-reading the sentence and sounding out the initial letter of the unknown word.

PAUSE

Tell the reader the correct word.

Re-read and tell about the meaning of the word in relation to the sentence.
About Reading

Reading is more than decoding the print on the page. Real reading is about making meaning from those small marks. If a child can decode the marks and say the words aloud, but isn’t making meaning, he/she is not really reading.

One important feature of print is its constancy. When children discover that the words in their favourite book are always the same, no matter who reads it, they are on their way to becoming readers themselves.

Reading should be a pleasure—don’t let it become a battleground. Nothing will kill a child’s pleasure in books faster than a nightly struggle with the take home reader. If your child can’t read the book to you, there are still many strategies that you can use to improve your child’s reading skills.

NB: Decoding is a strategy used to identify an unknown word.

Valuing Reading

- Let your child catch you reading for many purposes
- Talk about what you are reading. Is it funny or sad? Share your feelings even though the text is not at your child’s level.
- Ask relatives and friends to send postcards or letters addressed to your child.
- Read environmental print. Signs in the supermarket and information on packages are an integral part of shopping. Let your child see you use this information.
- Take your child to the public library, especially in school holidays. Public libraries run a variety of school holiday programs as well as regular story sessions for young children.

Family Reading

- Read aloud to your child every day for at least 10 minutes
- Read aloud snippets from family mail, newspapers or magazines
- Plan the weekly shopping together using junkmail and write a list
- Plan your holiday activities from brochures etc. even if you are not going away.
- Cook together from a recipe
- Make something using directions from a book or magazine
- Play with words. Make up silly sentences with rhyming words (The chook took the cook book.) or the same initial sounds (Smart Sam saw a slippery snake.) This attunes your child’s ears to initial and final sounds of words.
- Tell or read jokes and riddles. Children love them and many rely on sophisticated linguistic understanding