

Acquiring reading and writing skills by attending school regularly and working hard is something that all parents can encourage children to do. Reading can give pleasure and entertainment, as well as information. Writing enables people to keep in touch with family and friends who might be distant. Even aside from economic benefits, the skill of reading makes life richer.

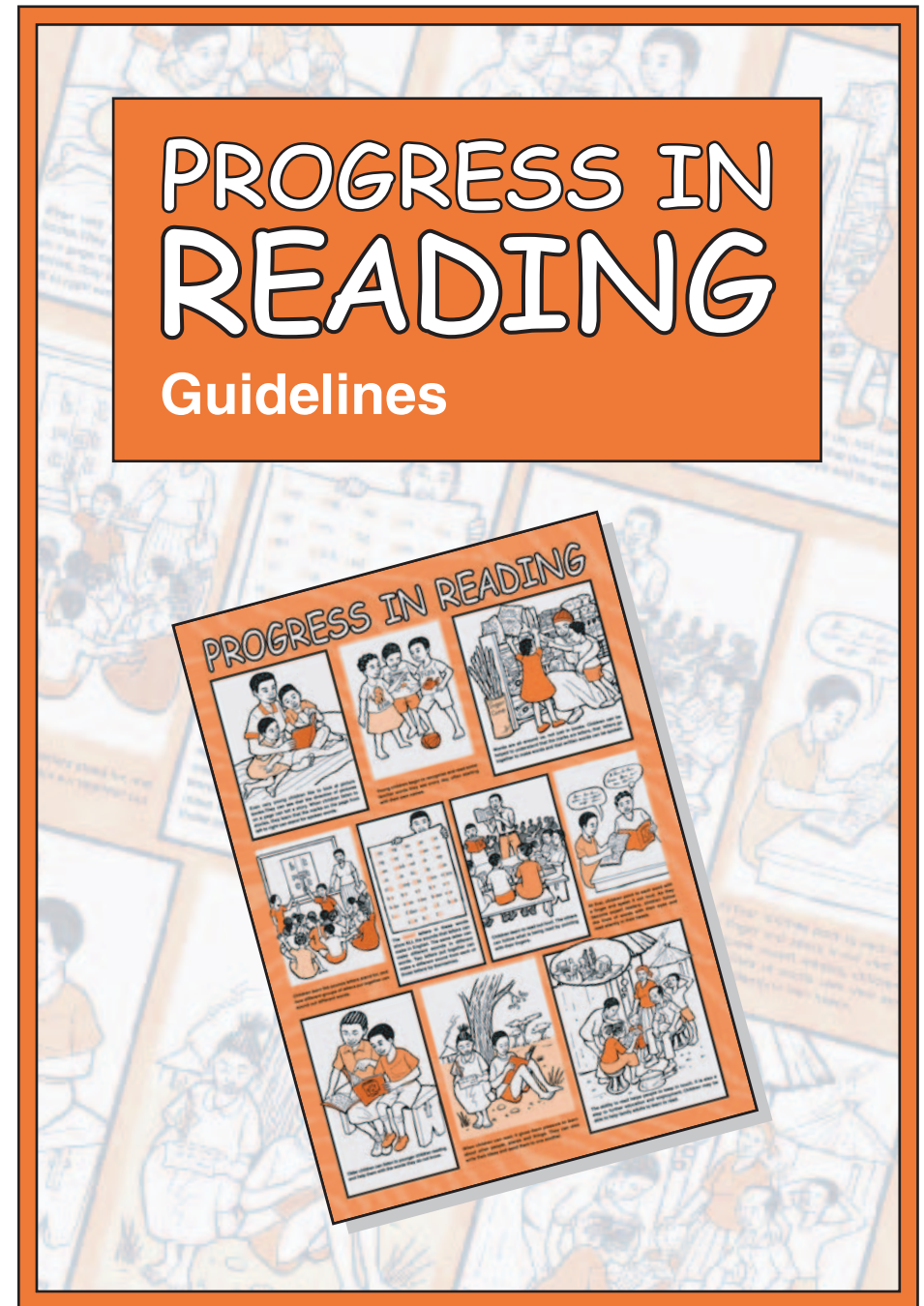


Reading is essential to continuing education. If children are to progress in their education, they must be able to gain knowledge from books.

Many kinds of employment also require reading skills. Even using computers depends on some reading.

Parents should encourage their children to read in order to increase their prospects of employment. Being able to read does not guarantee employment, but some kinds of employment depend on the ability to read.

Readers can also be very helpful to any members of the family or communities who have not had the chance and benefits that education offers. Parents should try to make their children aware of all these advantages of going to school regularly so as to learn to be expert readers.



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<http://www2.dfid.gov.uk>

## ‘Progress with Reading’ Poster

### Target audience:

The target audience is non-literate parents – those who have not had the benefit of schooling and for whom the process of learning to read is a mystery.

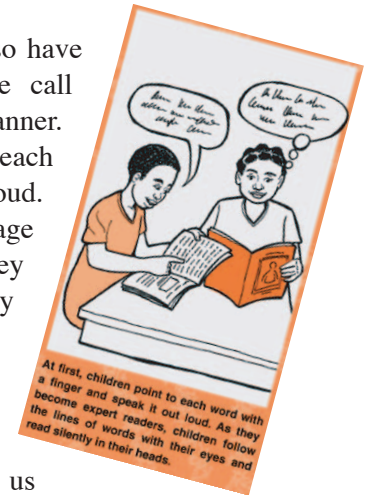
### Purpose:

If we attempt to empathise with those parents who have not had the opportunity of accessing formal education, or did so in a fragmented or limited manner, we may imagine that they may feel some sense of bewilderment at what goes on in school and how the process of learning to read occurs. In extreme cases, parents may feel ashamed of their lack of schooling and alienated from the process of their children’s education. Such parents need sympathetically delivered information in order to harness their interest in their children’s education in a productive manner, to involve them in schooling, to make them aware of the progress they might observe in their own offspring. We might hope that involving parents in such information exchange might be an empowering experience for them, one that will help to dispel some of the mystery of learning to read. It might also encourage parents to support their children’s school attendance. At the most optimistic, we might hope that the poster offers parents some advice as to how they might support their children’s efforts at learning to read and encourage a culture of literacy. Not least, the insights gained by discussing the process of learning to read with the support of the poster may encourage parents whose interest is stimulated to seek support for their own advancement in literacy skills by joining adult literacy classes. Finally, the poster might encourage school administrators and teachers, if they have not already done so, to engage parents in the process of their children’s education. The poster will be a resource available to parents through schools. As such, it invites discussion and collaboration between parents and teachers through Parent-Teacher Associations and other such arrangements.

### Method of Use:

Posters are usually fixed to a wall in places where their intended audience is likely to see them. Places where parents are likely to see the posters may

When we talk, we speak out aloud. We can also have silent conversations in our heads, which we call ‘thinking’. Reading proceeds in a similar manner. Early readers may place a card or ruler under each line and point to each word as they say it out aloud. As they become more expert, children manage without their fingers and their tongues. They follow the words with their eyes and read silently with their minds and brains.



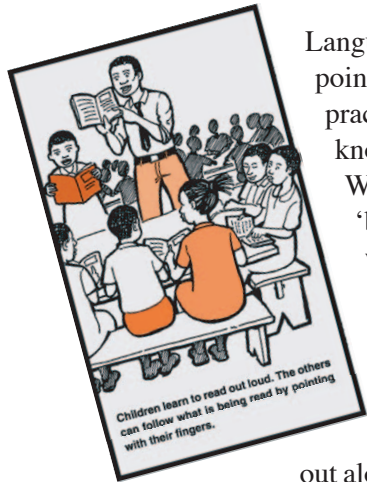
The boy on the left is shown pointing and reading aloud. The girl on the right is more expert and is reading silently. This tells us something about how skilled each child is at reading. However, there are times when even expert readers, including adults, read an unfamiliar word by pointing at the letters and building up the sounds until they can recognise the word.

Reading is one of the most important skills that children learn at school. Teachers spend much of their time teaching reading and listening to children read. Learning to read is learning the rules of communication through print. Until children have become competent readers, they need the support of other people – children or adults – who can help them through their difficulties. Older brothers and sisters, cousins, aunts and uncles, friends of the family – anyone who can read – can help by listening to young children and helping them with words they do not know and are unable to work out.



Parents can encourage older children, relatives and friends to help young readers by listening to them read and by giving them help when needed.

In the picture, the teacher is holding a poster that shows all the different sounds that are made in the English language. In many countries, children learn to speak, read and write in English. But they may learn to read and write in their mother tongue first, because they will already be experts at speaking their own language. This will make the job of learning to read and write easier for them because they already know the names and sounds of words in their language. Teachers could make similar posters in children's mother tongue to show all possible sounds in their own language. The important thing to remember is that each language has its own rules. Once children have learnt one set of rules, it is easier to learn another set of rules for a different language. Knowing the rules about the sounds letters make also enables children to read words they might not have seen before.



Language starts with speech. Even with babies, we point at something and say its name and the baby practices the word and uses it to make its needs known. The object becomes linked to a sound. When we hear the sounds for 'tree', 'water' or 'bread', we know in our brains and minds exactly what is meant. Reading develops in a similar way. A word stands for an object or an action. We learn to link the shape of the written word with its spoken sound.

When children first begin to read, they read out aloud. Very often, the teacher will use a set of books for the class. One child may read and the others follow the words by pointing with their fingers. In this way, children become as familiar with words as they are familiar with the objects the words stand for.

When children are learning to read, they need lots of practice in reading. They also need someone to read to and this is something parents can help with. If children do not know a word and ask for help, they can be offered help in two ways. One way is to encourage them to read the words in the sentence they know and try to work out the sense of the word they are struggling with. A second way of working out an unknown word is to build it up by sounding it out, using their knowledge of the sounds that letters make.

include school entrances, parents' rooms in schools – if these exist – and notice boards. It is stressed that the posters are not likely to be understood by parents if used in an entirely 'stand-alone' manner. They are intended to be introduced to parents – either by literate parents, or by education staff such as teachers. Once the messages have been talked through, the posters can be left for parents to discuss and for those who have heard the message to pass it on to their friends. At that point, the picture frames should convey the message (or remind them of how the images have been interpreted to them) without the need for text or spoken support.

### The Poster's Messages:

The poster attempts to summarise children's progress in learning to read, from infancy to adolescence. As we are all aware, in many countries in Africa, children's ages are not closely related to their school grade, form or standard. What is depicted in the poster is the kind of age-related progression to be expected when children have the advantage of attending school full-time, without a break. The notes below are not intended to be read as a script, but as ideas to use in dialogue with parents.

Children can enjoy books, magazines and comics long before they have learned how to read. They like to hold the books and turn the pages. They can point to the pictures. They can identify things in the pictures and discuss them. These activities give them confidence in handling books. All parents – including those who cannot themselves read, can encourage children to talk about the pictures. Children may enjoy making up their own stories – pretending to read - about what might happen next in the picture. If children and adults have access to comics or picture strips, they can get used to the idea of the direction of the story going from left to right, and from the top to the bottom of the page. This prepares them for the later understanding that the marks on the page – the written words that stand for spoken words – are also read from left to right.





Even before going to school, children are likely to meet some words that are special to them. For example, they may see words and pictures on their clothes or their own names written. They may even learn to write their own names. This could be writing with a stick in the sand, or with pencil and paper, or some other way. As with words being written and read from left to right, children learn that letters are put together to make words, and that the letters are written from left to right in lines across the page. Young children may learn to say the 26 letters that make the

alphabet, and how to write each one as a capital letter and small letter. More importantly, they may learn the sounds that the letters make. Young children may first make scribbled marks which are the forerunner of writing the letters of the alphabet. Once they have sufficient control to recognise and make shapes, they include letters in their scribble. It is important to recognize that young children – pre-schoolers – may lack the motor co-ordination to copy shapes. This skill is one they can be encouraged and helped to develop.

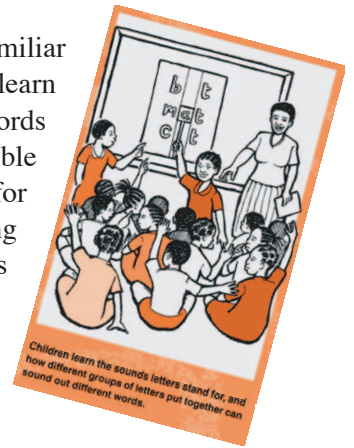


Even in rural areas, words are likely to be seen very frequently. They are printed on vehicles, on shops and businesses, on food and drinks packets, on coins and notes, on videos and televisions. Words tell us whether a white powder wrapped up in a packet is sugar or salt. Children see all these words as they go about their lives, long before they go to school. It is not too difficult for children to become familiar with a number of words just by recognising their shapes.

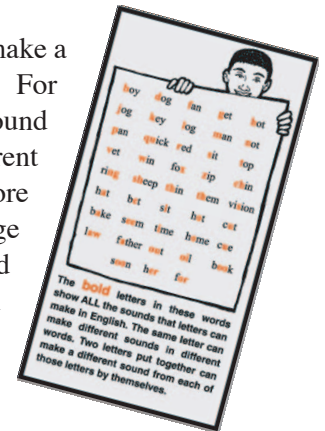
For example, the words 'boy' and 'girl' have opposite meanings and they have very different shapes. Adults can help young children to recognize the words that they see very often in their daily lives.

When children see the labels on food packets, either in the shop, or at home, adults can encourage them to say what they think the word says. This will help children to understand that reading is a useful activity which they can look forward to becoming skilled at when they go to school.

Children may learn some words by becoming familiar with their shapes. Teachers will help them to learn other reading skills so that children can read words they may not have seen before. This is possible because words are made from letters that stand for particular sounds. In the picture, the girl is moving the 'a' sound between three words. The 'a' makes the same sound even when it is in the middle of three very different words: 'bat', 'mat' and 'cat'.



Learning to read is not simple. The same letter can make a different sound when used in different words. For example, the letter 'c' sometimes makes a hard sound (like a 'k' as in 'cat') and sometimes a very different sound, (like an 's' – as in 'rice'). It gets even more complicated because the letter next to it can change the sound a letter makes. For example, when 'c' and 'h' are together, they make the 'ch' sound, as in 'chop'. Gradually, children learn all the rules about the sounds letters can make.



The rules for the sounds letters make may be slightly different in different languages. For example, some African languages have 'clicks' in them. People who haven't learned to use those sounds from an early age may find it very difficult ever to make those sounds as they should be pronounced, so they may never speak the language perfectly, like a 'mother tongue'.