

## Q&A HOW TO ENGAGE RELUCTANT READERS AND SUPPORT CHILDREN WITH SPEECH AND LANGUAGE DIFFICULTIES.



### Q How can I motivate my child who is reluctant to read?

A reluctant reader is not always a struggling reader. Your child may be turned off from reading for a variety of reasons such as boredom, disinterest, poor attention span, or a preference for the visual stimulation of TV, online videos and video games instead of books.

To make reading 'cool':

- 1. Follow their interests.** Be guided by what your child wishes to read. Select books with characters or stories that mirror his experiences and interests. When children see themselves in a story or connect with the character, it will keep them engaged for much longer. Allow your child to also select the books he wants to read.
- 2. Read out loud.** This helps your child connect the written word with speech. Use the '3Es' of Emotions, Energy and Expression to bring stories to life. And don't stop at books. Get your child to practise reading aloud short snippets, such as what is on a cereal box, shopping lists, mall directories, the names of TV shows, advertisements and other environmental print.
- 3. Get tech-y.** E-books and storybook apps offer multimedia along with entertaining and educational narratives. This can help increase children's motivation to read and draw their interest. Use this mode of reading alongside traditional reading from time to time. Be there to provide guidance and engage them beyond the screen by discussing the story and what they think of it.

### Q What are some signs that raise concerns about children's language development? What can be done?

Children's language development is a highly dynamic process. Right from birth, babies are constantly learning and absorbing information from the people and environment around them. By the time they are six months old, children are typically able to babble and look towards the direction of sound. By one year, they can understand simple instructions like "give" and "come", and say their first words such as "papa" or "mama".

- > **Know the milestones.** Be aware of the expected language milestones at each age. This is important to identify children whose development might be slower or who need help.
- > **Talk, talk, talk.** Children pick up language best when they hear it being used around them. The more we talk, the better and faster they can learn. Interact directly with them and speak in proper language. Avoid baby talk. Read aloud to them. Wait for them to respond and express their thoughts.
- > **Observe their social skills.** Social interaction and language are closely linked, and difficulties in these areas often co-exist. Encourage group play, and see how the child interacts and communicates with peers and adults.
- > **Seek professional help early.** Do not adopt a 'wait and see' approach if you are concerned or intervention is required. The younger the child is when he or she receives help, the better the outcome.



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