How to Read with a Beginning Reader  
(Adapted from ‘How to read with a beginning reader’ by Joanne Meier, 2009)

Sometimes parents of beginning readers wonder if their child is on track with their reading. They wonder why their child cannot read a word they were able to read yesterday or think their child reads too slowly. Most beginning readers are inconsistent; they may know a word one day, but not the next. They may say short or choppy words, miss punctuation, and can tell you little about what they have just read.

At the beginning stages of reading this behaviour is to be expected. Beginning readers are working on several skills at once such as matching letter to sound, decoding, fluency and accuracy. Without fluency, students must decode each word and that takes time and energy – leaving less focus on comprehension and expression. As parents, the question is often asked... how do I help my child at home?

When reading with a beginning reader it is important to do the following:

1. Give them time to read. Reading is a skill and it takes time to develop. A beginning reader should spend 20 minutes a day reading to someone. The books read in this time should be relatively easy for your child.
2. Let them reread the same books. Rereading the same words helps to build fluency. Over time, you’ll notice that your child will stop less often to decode words.
3. Take turns reading. By listening to your fluent reading, your child will hear what good readers sound like. After you have read a short passage ask your child to reread the same passage. This provides a chance for them to practice reading with expression.
4. Have realistic expectations. Students should be reading books at home that are relatively easy for them. Never push a difficult book into the hands of a beginning reader.
5. Show a love of reading – read newspapers, comics, books, signs, brochures and anything of interest.

It is important that you nurture your beginning reader in a way that helps reading become a daily habit and a lifelong love. By being aware of what’s normal for a beginning reader and knowing how to help them progress, you’re sure to instil those qualities in your reader.

“Why can’t I skip my 20 minutes of reading tonight” demonstrates the value of a minimum 20mins reading a day. For older readers, silent sustained reading is a skill that needs to be developed – building time up as the reader develops. Students who read 20mins a day will be exposed to 1.8million more words than those who don’t. Build your child for success and support reading at home!

### Why Can’t I Skip My 20 Minutes of Reading Tonight?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student “A”</th>
<th>Student “B”</th>
<th>Student “C”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>reads 20 minutes each day</td>
<td>reads 5 minutes each day</td>
<td>reads 1 minute each day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3600 minutes in a school year</td>
<td>900 minutes in a school year</td>
<td>180 minutes in a school year</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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1,800,000 words

282,000 words

8,000 words

90th percentile

50th percentile

10th percentile

By the end of 6th grade Student “A” will have read the equivalent of 60 whole school days. Student “B” will have read only 12 school days. Which student would you expect to have a better vocabulary? Which student would you expect to be more successful in school...and in life?

(Nagy & Herman, 1987)