

Does your child struggle to read unknown words? Word solving, or figuring out unknown words, is called “decoding.”

Decoding Tips



When your child tries to read unknown words, remember... it's not possible to “sound out” many words in English, so saying, “Sound it out,” is not often a helpful strategy to suggest. **First, just wait** for your child to try an unknown word; don't tell him/her the word right away. Then, try the ideas below:

To solve an unknown word, say to your child...

“Think about what's happening in the book (section, paragraph, or sentence). Read the sentence with the tricky word from the beginning and start to say the first part of the tricky word. What word would make sense?”

Go from KNOWN to NEW.

Use letters and known parts in words your child knows to decode an unknown word. (Example: If you know **rain**, you can read train; if you know **stop** and **play**, you can read stay.) Help your child make the connection between KNOWN and NEW words.

To correct a word...

“Did that make sense? Does it look right?”

“Read again and try a word that makes sense and looks right.”

Tell your child the word (as a last resort)...

Say, “Would _____ make sense and look right?”

Praise your child for doing these things:

- Thinking about what is happening in the book
- Reading smoothly like a story teller, not like a robot
- Using expression that reflects what is happening in the book
- Paying attention to the punctuation so the reading makes sense
- Using pictures to help solve words
- Reading all the parts of a long word, not just the beginning; looking at the middle and end parts, too
- Noticing and fixing mistakes
- Rereading to solve words
- Reading on to the end of the sentence to solve words