



LIFE Paired Reading Volunteer Handbook



“Literacy is... the road to human progress and the means through which every man, woman and child can realize his or her full potential.”

Kofi Annan, former Secretary-General, UN

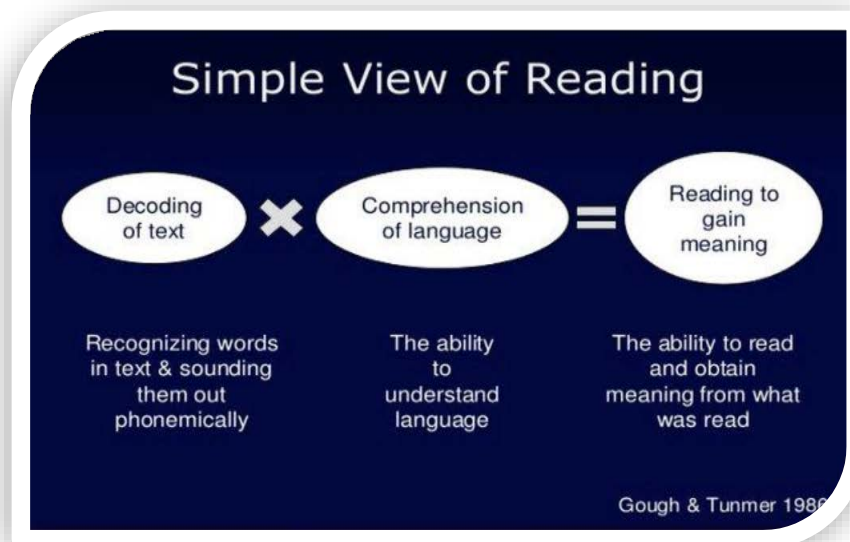
Introduction

Dear **LIFE** Volunteer,

Thank-you for being a part of **LIFE's Paired Reading Programme**. Learning to read is the single most important skill that a child needs to succeed in school and throughout life.

For children who struggle to read, learning can become a frustrating endeavor which affects their self-esteem and their motivation to participate actively in academic activities.

Fortunately, decades of research on the reading brain and how children learn to read has identified the *Simple View of Reading* as the best-known approach for teaching children to read efficiently and confidently, as illustrated below:



LIFE's Paired Reading Programme builds children's reading skills, by introducing decoding and comprehension strategies through the exploration of engaging age-appropriate texts.

Children learn to attend carefully to the words on the page, build vocabulary and fluency, and develop various comprehension strategies.

Most importantly, children discover the sheer joy of reading, as they engage with the adventures contained in exciting books.

As a **LIFE Paired Reading Volunteer**, you are helping provide the most wonderful gift a child can receive.

Thank-you for being our **Reading Hero!**

How Reading is Taught in Schools



In government schools, beginning reading is taught using a systematic, synthetic phonics approach presented in the [Read Write Inc \(RWInc\) Phonics](#) programme.

Initially, students are taught the simple letter sounds, followed by the complex sounds. These are called [speed sounds](#) as students are expected to recognise and produce them easily and automatically.

Next, they are taught to blend these sounds using decodable texts, containing the speed sounds that they are working on. Some speed sounds comprise two or more letters such as 'ee', 'ay', 'ph', 'igh'. These letter combinations are called [special friends](#).

Students blend sounds using [Fred Talk](#), a major decoding strategy used to decode unfamiliar words. [Fred Frog](#) is a reading buddy who can only speak words in individual sounds. Students learn to decipher the words that Fred is trying to say by blending the sounds together. For example, Fred says, /c/a/t/ for 'cat.'

Although the vast majority of words in the English language are phonetically decodable, some are not easily decodable using a phonetic approach. These are called [sight words](#) or [red words](#). Children are expected to build a large lexicon of sight words that they can recognise instantly.

How to Conduct the Paired Reading Session

Paired Reading is a simple, effective technique to help struggling readers increase reading fluency and accuracy. Follow the steps below when conducting the session.

BEFORE READING

Step 1: Sit with the student in a quiet location without too many distractions. Position the book so that both of you can easily follow from the text.

Step 2: Talk with the student about the cover of the book. Ask students to make predictions about what they think the story will be about, the name of the author or illustrator or how the illustrations on the cover remind them of a personal or previous reading experience. A list of suggested questions is provided in **Appendix A**.

DURING READING

Step 3: Say to the student, “Now we are going to read aloud together for a little while. Whenever you want to read alone, just tap the back of my hand like this (demonstrate) and I will stop reading. If you come to a word you don’t know, I will help you read the word.”

Step 4: Begin reading aloud with the student. Remember to adjust the reading speed to accommodate the student’s pace. If the student gets stuck on a word, use the 3Ps (Pause, Prompt, Praise). N.B. **Do not encourage the child to guess the word or rely on picture cues to determine the word.** When the student reads the word correctly, offer praise and continue reading the passage. If the student continues to struggle, provide the word, and have the student repeat it.

Step 5: Remember to pause during reading to ask one or two questions to develop comprehension skills and build suspense and interest.

Step 6: When the child indicates the appropriate signal (a hand tap), stop reading aloud and follow along silently as the student continues to read out loud. Remember to offer praise occasionally for specific reading behaviours (e.g. “That was a hard word. You did a nice job sounding it out!”) N.B. If after reading several pages, the child does not tap your hand, say “It’s your turn now, you can continue reading from there.”

AFTER READING

Step 7: After reading, praise students for their reading skills and ask one or two questions from the ‘**After Reading** questions list in **Appendix A.**’ Allow students to express their thoughts and feelings about the reading experience. If there is time and the child is willing, the story can be read a second time.

Step 8: If there is time left over, practise reading **sight words** or '**red words**' with students.

Paired Reading Strategies

ASKING QUESTIONS

Asking questions is a comprehension strategy that helps students **clarify** and **comprehend** what they are reading.

When students regularly ask questions, they are encouraged to:

- engage with the text;
- think critically;
- seek answers in the text;
- discuss the text with others, and generate **rich quality talk**.

Please see the list of questions you can ask students 'before', 'during' and 'after' reading in **Appendix A**.

THE 3Ps – PAUSE, PROMPT, PRAISE

The 3Ps or **Pause, Prompt, Praise** is a method used when listening to students read. When children encounter difficulty with a word, the following is a great way to help.

Pause: for around 3-5 seconds. This is important because children can often self-correct if given time. They read more slowly than we do and need processing time. If we jump in too quickly, not only do we make them reliant on us to help them, but we undermine their self-confidence.

Prompt: if the child cannot self-correct, offer them a phonic prompt or a meaning prompt.

- The first prompt should be a phonic prompt. "Let's make the sound of the letters in that word"
- If they still can't get it, sound out the word for them with a slight pause between each sound e.g. f - r - o - g using **Fred talk**. Encourage children to sound out and then blend the word.
- You could also identify the first sound and encourage them to sound out the rest or break the word into syllables. It may be useful to cover the word and reveal it slowly, looking at the sounds or the sections of the word.
- If the student substitutes an incorrect word, you can say, "Did that word make sense in the passage? Let's look at the letters in the word and try it again."

Praise: is an important part of reading. Give specific praise when a child corrects an error or reads the word correctly after a prompt. "You figured that out by yourself," or "You sounded that out with only a little bit of help."

DECODING STRATEGIES

If students get stuck on a word, they don't need to guess. Here's what to do:

Decodable words:

1. Point to the first letter. Ask, "What's the first sound in that word?" If they get it, point to the other letters, and let them blend the whole word.
2. If they don't get it, Say, "Let's **Fred Talk** that word". Use **Fred Frog** to make the sound in each word and blend the whole word together.

Partially decodable words/Red words:

1. Ask "Are there **special friends** in this word?" If the answer is 'yes' say, "Point to the special friends. What's the sound?" then "Let's say the word."
2. If they don't get it, say, "Let's **Fred Talk** that word." Use **Fred Frog** to make the sound in each word and blend the whole word together.



Let's Fred Talk that Word!

Fred says when I read I...	
Point to the word and look at all the letters.	
Stretch and say all the sounds matched to the letters and then blend them together.	/sss/ /uuu/ /nnn/
Say the word	sun
Think... Reread the sentence and think. Does it make sense?	

APPENDIX A

Before, During and After Questions Chart

Before Reading	During Reading	After Reading
<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ What is the title?➤ Who is the author/illustrator?➤ What do you predict will happen in this story/text?➤ What do you already know about this topic?➤ What do you think the character will want?➤ What questions do you have about this text? (I wonder...)➤ Why do you want to read this book?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ What do you predict will happen next?➤ What does this book remind you of?➤ What do you predict will happen next?➤ What were you picturing in your mind?➤ How is the character feeling? Why?➤ How are you like the character?➤ What has surprised you so far?➤ Tell me what has happened so far?➤ Were your predictions, right? How?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ What happened first?➤ What happened next?➤ What happened after that?➤ What happened last?➤ What was the most important thing that happened/that you learned?➤ How did the book make you feel?➤ What did/didn't you like about the book?➤ Describe the characters and the setting.➤ If the book continued, what might happen?➤ How was the problem in the story solved?