

How to help your child learn English



by Claire Selby

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why

when

how

what

who

English

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About the author

Introduction

You have probably opened this book with a particular child in mind – your child, grandchild, niece, nephew or other relative.

Writing this book, I also have children in mind – the faces of my own children who grew up bi-lingual in their early years, as well as the many happy, sleepy, or excited faces of the pre-primary and primary aged children in different countries that I have met over the last ten years.

I have combined these experiences and observations with research. The collected articles and papers I have drawn on are not just about how children acquire language but also about how their memories file and store information. More and more research is being conducted into which signals attract and hold their attention when they are interested to learn. These are as much the keys to success in learning language as the syllabus of words itself.

As a linguist by training, I understand that learning a second language through formal channels, such as lessons, is not easy and to progress to a good level of fluency during the primary years is a challenge. Over the last ten years I have tried to find a simple, effective way to help children meet that challenge.

Along the way I have met many parents who have asked me how they can help their child to learn English better and faster, even if they are not teachers or do not speak English well themselves.

The parents have told me they know that stories or songs can help, but that they are not sure which ones to choose.

They worry when they see their child come home from pre-school with lists of words to learn that it will be too hard. They are concerned that their child is not making progress or else seems to learn and then forget. They are not sure what to expect at each age and so do not know if their child is doing well or falling behind. They are frustrated because there does not seem to be a path they can follow.

At last I can offer those parents some answers.

There are facts you can know, processes you can understand, steps you can take and a clear path you can follow. They are explained in this book.

To keep this guide as simple as possible, the next few chapters will ask and answer the following questions: why, when, how, what, who.

- Why English?
- When should your child start learning English?
- How do children learn English best?
- What should you expect from your child at each age?
- Who should help your child learn?

The remainder of the book is filled with suggestions of how you can help.

Pick any chapter to start or begin here.