***How can I help my beginning reader when he gets stuck on a word?***

When children begin reading, we want them to develop as much independence as possible. They are more likely to become capable, enthusiastic readers if they can pick up a book on their level and enjoy it without help, even if they don’t know every word. For this reason, we teach them “strategies” to use when they get stuck. Our goal is for them to use these strategies spontaneously, but they sometimes need prompting.

When your child gets stuck on a word, first give him some “wait time” to see if he can figure it out on his own. Then suggest one or more of these strategies:

* Point to the first letter. What is the beginning sound?
* Look at the picture. Does the picture give you a clue?
* Do you see other parts of the word you know (e.g., *-it* or *-ack*)?
* Go back to the beginning of the sentence and try again.
* Skip the word, finish the sentence, and then try again. (This is a strategy that students usually don’t learn until late first grade.)

If these strategies don’t help, tell your child the word. If the word is particularly difficult for any reason, such as an unusual spelling (*laugh*) or unfamiliar meaning (*gypsy*), don’t hesitate to read the word for him right away. If your child is getting stuck on more than one word in twenty, the book is too difficult. Children need lots of practice with easy books to become fluent readers.

Reading with your child should be pleasant, and you should not have to be your child’s teacher. My son wouldn’t accept my help, even though I was an “expert.” Instead, I made sure the books were within his grasp or were motivating enough for him to view me as a partner.

If you would like more help, please contact me. Children are all different, and what works for one may not work for another.