30 ways in 30 days
LeapFrog, inspiring a love of reading for 20 years
Teaching a child to read at home can be a daunting thought for many parents. Our research shows that whilst 72 per cent agree on the importance of continuing children’s education outside of school hours, almost half of UK parents are anxious about taking on this responsibility saying they lack confidence and techniques.

Inspiring a love of reading is LeapFrog’s passion – after all, we are a company born of a desire of one father to find a better way of teaching his son to read. Since 1995, we’ve been offering parents solutions and tools to fuel a passion for reading at home and as part of our 20th anniversary celebrations, we’ve joined forces with educational expert, Janette Wallis, to create this confidence boosting guide for parents on how best to support their child as they learn to read.

We know that children learn best when they are having fun, but we also believe parents teach best when they enjoy it too which is why we have come up with 30 simple tips and playful ‘how to’ techniques to try at home. So simple, you could try one every day for a month as part of your family routine.

We also have a whole range of reading toys that bring the joy of reading to life for active little minds, from Read with Me Scout & Violet interactive puppies for ages 2-5, to our ground-breaking complete Learn-to-Read-and-Write System, LeapReader, for 4-8 year olds. This range supports home learning fun and reinforces classroom techniques as each of our toys are designed and approved by our unique full-time in-house team of learning experts, who all hold PhDs in various specialities including education, child development and educational psychology.

You can find out more about our reading toys at http://www.leapfrog.com/en-gb/products/reading-family
A family event calendar to track after-school activities, events and programmes could prove really useful but also great fun to teach your little ones reading and writing skills! Challenge them to help you write a personalised calendar – it can really help them get excited about what’s coming up and helps with writing and letter formation, but also reading if you ask them to tell you what’s on today! Use colour coding if you have more than one child.

Set a daily time to read to your children and try to stick to it! We can all be too exhausted for reading at bedtime – Mums and Dads included. What about first thing in the morning, or immediately after supper? Remember, reading aloud is not just about them learning to read, it’s also one of the best way to build their spoken vocabulary, attention skills and comprehension.

Read stories or rhymes that have repetitive parts and encourage your child to join in! Think Old McDonald’s Farm or The Wheels on the Bus! Repetition builds their vocabulary and is key to learning words that cannot be sounded out using phonics.

Hang a family message board in the kitchen. Leave simple notes for one another with plenty of illustrations! LeapFrog’s LeapReader can encourage little writers even further. The reading and writing solution has interactive paper that will ‘speak’ to your child and guide them stroke-by-stroke as they use the stylus to form letters on the page.

Old newspapers and magazines are good for introducing your child to different print styles and they’re great for cutting-out fun. When they spot the letters that they need to make up their own name, help your child to cut them out and stick them on a piece of card. Cut the name card up into individual letters and you’ve got an instant homemade name jigsaw! Try this with other people’s names too, like friends and family.
Plan a family book club. Everyone reads the same book (or has it read to them). Then get together over popcorn to discuss the story. It’s a great way to connect!

As children learn to read themselves, consider allowing them to stay up a bit later as a treat - so long as it’s reading time! Why not help your child build their very own night time reading den out of cushions and chairs and cosy up inside for a special story adventure.

Reward older children for finishing a whole book by renting the book’s DVD, like Disney’s Brave or Finding Nemo! Ask them to explain how it differs from the book to help build comprehension skills.

Stickers help them stick-to-it! Try putting a sticker on the calendar on each ‘reading day’; once they have ten in a row - no gaps - it’s time for a treat!

Hide a variety of objects inside a bag or pillow case. Pull one item out at a time and ask your child what it is. And... what sound does it start with? You could even move on to finding this letter on an alphabet chart, or writing down the letter or the word, depending on what stage your child is at. To start with, make sure you have lots of objects that start with the same letter (soap, sock, spoon and so on). Then, as their knowledge increases, move on to a mixed bag!

When you’re out and about, don’t forget to take along books, story CDs or portable learning devices like LeapReader. LeapReader combines both reading and writing into one electronic learning device, making it a time efficient and fun learning activity that children can enjoy alone, or with the support of their parents.

Bake! Following a recipe is a great way to practice reading on the sly. Get your child to tell you what is needed from the cupboard and fridge. If cakes or cookies aren’t your thing, then why not concoct home-made play dough?

Get older children to read to younger ones for a win all around. It will give you some time off while both children benefit. Or why not swap roles and encourage your child to read aloud to you! Joke books are brilliant for this.
Audio books, like those available with LeapFrog’s LeapReader, are a great way to pass a car journey or help your child wind down for sleep. Learning by listening is also great for building vocabulary and expanding your child’s imagination. LeapReader combines three literacy experiences - reading, writing and listening - all into one electronic device.

Word searches are a fun and easy way to reinforce vocabulary and spelling. They are also a great way to occupy the kids either at home or during long journeys.

Help your child tackle a more challenging book today by taking turns reading pages. It will feel less overwhelming and the storyline can be clearer.

The alphabet game is perfect to help reading skills by making letters familiar by sound. It’s great for car journeys, but why not try playing it indoors on a rainy summer afternoon too? This game works best with a theme - pick animals for example and tell your child the name of an animal beginning with ‘A’. Your child then has to follow with an animal beginning with a ‘B’ - then it’s back to you for ‘C’ and so on....

Especially busy day? Make a plan ahead of time to work reading into it. Children can be reading when they least expect it - at the park, standing alongside you in the kitchen or even in shops. Why not put your little one in charge of the shopping list today and get your child to help write your list or read out what’s next on the list? Or ask them to find things in the supermarket beginning with select letters, for example ‘find me something that begins with a ‘B’.

Word families are groups of words that have a common feature or pattern - they have some of the same combinations of letters in them and a similar sound. Children who understand word families have an easier time learning to spell and decode (sound out) words. Why not try playing a game with your children to come up with words related to each other and see how many you can get? ‘At’ is a great one to start with!

Play games like I-spy that use letter sounds rather than letter names. They’re perfect for building phonic awareness (“I spy with my little eye something beginning with Buh”).

Try reading a non-fiction book for a change! Think pirates, castles, monsters, history, sports and space. LeapReader has a range of discovery sets which teach a variety of subjects such as geography and life sciences, so your children can learn to read whilst also learning about lots of different subjects!
How about writing a letter (on paper!) to send to your child’s favourite author? There is a good chance he or she will reply. Most authors nowadays have a website where you should be able to find their address.

Nominate one day each week as Library Day – a time when you can visit your nearby branch with your children, help them choose books, and maybe even take part in a story or activity hour. Try to make it a ritual you both look forward to. Do let them have a say in the books you check out, but also include some of your own choosing. Small children have a tendency to lunge for the books with the coolest covers!

Try not to overschedule. Consider limiting your child’s TV viewing time, and go easy on the extracurricular activities, to make sure they have enough time for reading.

Help your child create his or her own alphabet book. Take photos of objects around the house and neighbourhood that begin with each letter of the alphabet. Then arrange them into a book, complete with cover, title page and dedication.

I have yet to meet a child who can resist a joke book. Keep one in the car and encourage your child to tell you jokes and riddles as you drive. Don’t forget to giggle!

Whet your children’s whistles by reading the first few pages of a book, but then hand it over to them. Make sure to end your reading at a cliff-hanger!

How about celebrating the first day of half term or even a quiet Sunday by having a pyjamas and books day? Everyone is allowed to stay in their jammies and slippers and spend a lazy day reading together.

Nothing beats receiving mail! Consider giving your child a subscription to a children’s magazine as a birthday gift or for Christmas.

Try to resist giving your child books that are above their reading level. If anything, aim a little below his or her ability. You are trying to build confidence and a love of reading. If you can succeed in doing that, then reading achievement is sure to follow.

Visit the LeapFrog UK YouTube page to find out what UK primary school teachers think of LeapReader, our complete Learn-to-Read-and-Write solution.

Follow LeapFrog UK on Facebook and @LeapFrog_UK on Twitter for the latest LeapFrog news.