

READ AHEAD

Your Tutor At Home

5 Reasons Reading Gets Stuck (And What To Do)

A calm, practical guide for parents who want to help their child read with confidence—without pressure, confusion, or burnout.

*Created by an experienced literacy interventionist
with over 20 years of hands-on work supporting
children at all learning levels*

This guide is 100% FREE

Share it with any parent who needs it

Your Tutor At Home

Helping families build confident readers, one child at a time
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Why Reading Gets Stuck

Many children struggle with reading not because they are lazy, unmotivated, or incapable—but because something essential was missed along the way.

Reading is a system. When one part breaks down, progress slows or stops entirely. The good news? Once you identify where the breakdown is happening, you can fix it.

This guide breaks down the five most common reasons reading gets stuck and gives you clear, parent-friendly actions you can take right away.

No jargon. No guilt. Just practical help.

What You'll Learn:

- Why your child might know letters but still can't read
- The hidden skill that makes or breaks reading success
- How to tell if your child was pushed too fast (and how to fix it)
- Why memorization stops working—and what to do instead
- How to make reading practice calm instead of stressful

Important:

Reading struggles are NOT a reflection of your child's intelligence or your parenting. With the right support, reading can become calm, achievable, and even enjoyable again.

1

Weak Sound-Letter Connections

The Foundation of Reading

Reading depends on the brain's ability to connect sounds (phonemes) to letters (graphemes). When this connection is shaky, children guess, memorize shapes, or avoid reading entirely.

This is THE most common reason reading gets stuck. Many children know letter NAMES (A, B, C) but don't know letter SOUNDS (/a/, /b/, /c/). Letter sounds unlock reading.

What Parents Often Notice:

- Your child knows letter names but can't read simple words
- They guess words based on pictures or first letters only
- They forget words they read correctly yesterday
- They can spell a word aloud but can't read it
- Reading feels like random guessing

Why This Happens:

Most children are taught letter names first (songs, alphabet books, posters). But reading requires letter SOUNDS. Knowing 'C' is called 'see' doesn't help you read 'cat.' You need to know C makes the /k/ sound.

What You Can Do (Starting Today):

- Focus on sounds first, not letter names
- Practice 5-10 minute daily sound drills
- Use simple CVC words (cat, mat, sit) for blending practice
- Start with easiest sounds: s, m, t, p, a, n
- Say 'What sound?' not 'What letter?'

2 Reading Was Rushed

Before the Brain Was Ready

Some children are pushed into reading before foundational skills are developed. This creates frustration, anxiety, and avoidance. When reading becomes emotional, the brain shifts to survival mode—and learning shuts down.

Reading readiness isn't about age. It's about neural pathways. Rushing doesn't speed learning—it creates resistance.

What Parents Often Notice:

- Your child reads but becomes emotionally overwhelmed
- They shut down during homework or reading time
- Reading that was okay suddenly becomes a battle
- Your child says 'I'm dumb' or 'I hate reading'
- Progress happened, then suddenly stopped

Why This Happens:

Schools focus on grade-level expectations instead of individual readiness. When pushed too fast, children use coping strategies (memorization, guessing) instead of true decoding. This works briefly, then falls apart—and they've learned reading is stressful.

What You Can Do (Starting Today):

- Slow down—accuracy before speed
- Allow oral responses instead of writing when possible
- Build confidence with EASIER material
- Let your child reread the same book multiple times
- Focus on progress, not grade level
- Celebrate small wins: 'You sounded that out!'

3

Gaps in Phonemic Awareness

The Hidden Skill That Makes or Breaks Reading

Phonemic awareness is the ability to hear and manipulate sounds in words—WITHOUT letters. If this skill is weak, reading becomes guesswork.

This is the 'secret ingredient' most people don't know about. You can't see it. You can't test it with flashcards. But without it, reading never clicks.

What Parents Often Notice:

- Your child struggles to rhyme (cat/hat, sit/pit)
- They can't tell you the first or last sound in a word
- They can't break 'cat' into /c/ /a/ /t/
- They can't blend sounds together smoothly
- Reading feels like memorizing, not decoding

Why This Happens:

Many children aren't taught phonemic awareness explicitly. Schools assume it develops naturally, but for 30-40% of kids, it doesn't. Without this skill, letters don't make sense.

What You Can Do (Starting Today):

- Play sound-based games WITHOUT letters
- Practice rhyming daily (What rhymes with 'cat'?)
- Segment words aloud: 'Cat' is /c/ /a/ /t/
- Blend sounds: I'll say sounds, you say the word
- Use songs, clapping games, word play
- Make it fun—not a test!

4 Too Much Focus on Memorization

The Strategy That Stops Working

When children memorize words as shapes instead of learning to decode, progress stalls. Memorization works for 10, 20, maybe 50 words. Then the brain runs out of space.

Children who rely on memorization hit a wall around 1st or 2nd grade. That's when reading gets harder—because they never built the decoding system.

What Parents Often Notice:

- Your child reads familiar books but can't read new ones
- They memorize word lists but can't apply them
- They read 'the' correctly, then guess 'that' or 'they'
- They can't sound out simple new words
- Progress stopped after initial success

Why This Happens:

Sight word lists and flashcards encourage memorization. While some words (like 'the') do need to be memorized, most words should be decoded. Memorization is a crutch, not a strategy.

What You Can Do (Starting Today):

- Ask your child to sound out unfamiliar words
- Praise the PROCESS: 'I love how you sounded that out!'
- Use decodable books (books with patterns)
- Teach 1-2 new sight words at a time, not 10
- Focus on word families (-at, -it, -an)
- Build the system, not the word list

5

Stress and Pressure

When Reading Becomes Emotional

When reading becomes emotional, the brain shifts into survival mode. Learning cannot happen under constant pressure. The more you push, the more they resist.

This is the hardest one to fix—because it's not about skills. It's about repair. You have to rebuild trust with reading.

What Parents Often Notice:

- Reading time ends in tears or arguments
- Your child avoids books completely
- They say 'I can't' before even trying
- Physical symptoms (stomach aches, headaches) before reading
- What was fun is now a battle

Why This Happens:

Repeated failure creates anxiety. Anxiety blocks learning. Now reading = stress, and the brain wants to avoid it. This is a protective response, not laziness.

What You Can Do (Starting Today):

- Create short, calm, predictable reading routines (5-10 minutes)
- Separate reading practice from grades or punishment
- Let your child choose books (even if they're 'too easy')
- Read together, not at them
- Celebrate effort, not perfection
- Take breaks when needed—forcing doesn't work

What To Do Next

Reading struggles are not a reflection of your child's intelligence—or your parenting. With the right support, reading can become calm, achievable, and even enjoyable again.

You don't have to do this alone.

Ready for a Structured Plan?

The READ AHEAD program gives you:

- A 7-day parent guide with step-by-step scripts
- Decodable mini-books your child can actually read
- Fun games and activities that build skills
- 20+ worksheets for daily practice
- Everything you need to help your child catch up

Visit: YourTutorAtHome.com

Or email: cs@yourtutorathome.com

You've got this. Your child can learn to read.

One sound, one word, one page at a time.