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# The Parents' Guide to Usborne Very First Reading

Reading with confidence is both the key to success at school and the source of a lifetime's pleasure. **Usborne Very First Reading** is an inspired series of fifteen books, designed to give your child the best possible start: the enjoyment of reading together, the support of a well-researched framework, and above all the appeal of imaginative rhyming stories and irresistible illustrations.

[www.usborne.com/veryfirstreading](http://www.usborne.com/veryfirstreading)



THE PARENTS' GUIDE TO USBORNE VERY FIRST READING

USBORNE

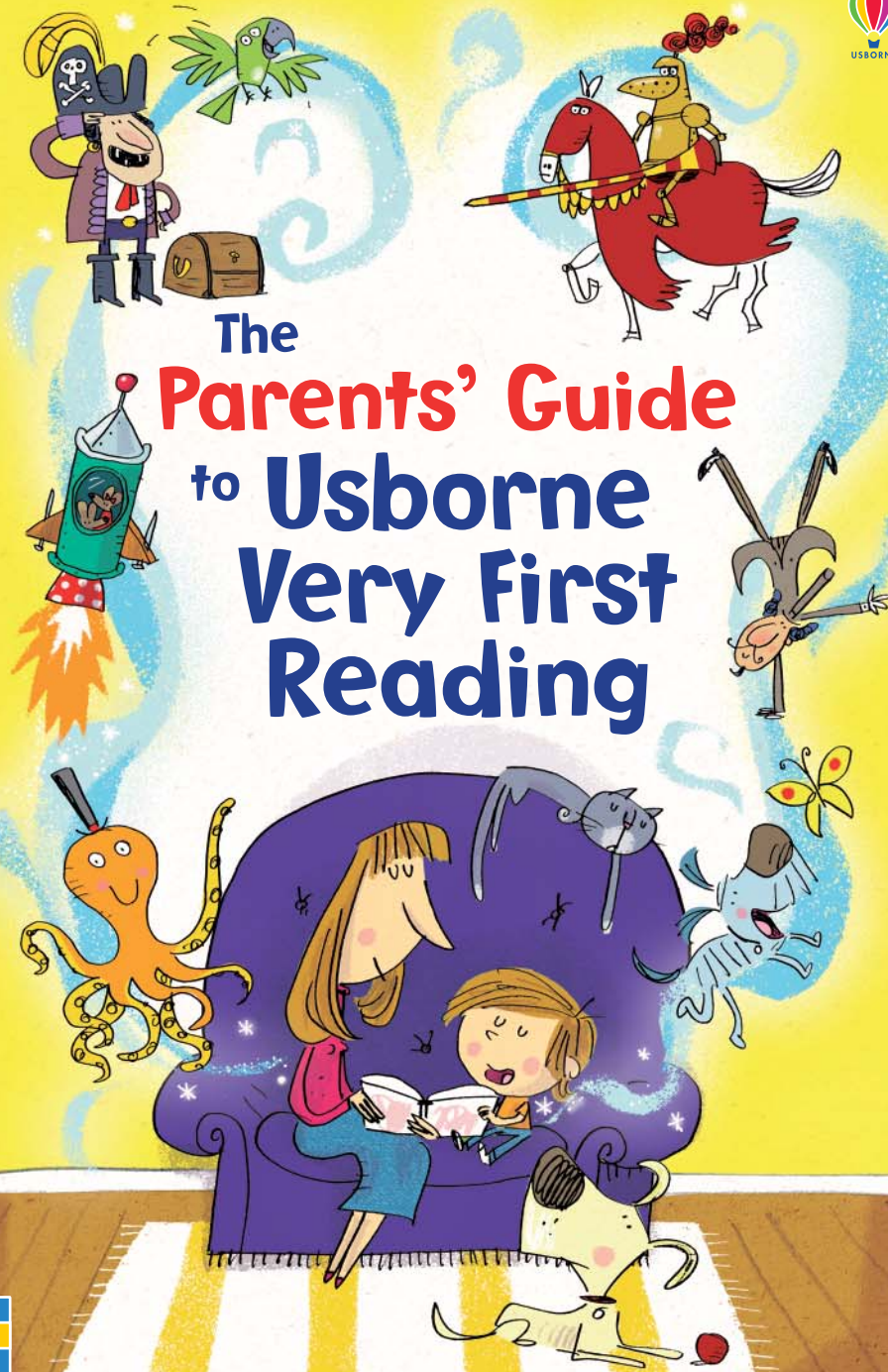


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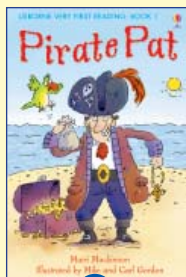


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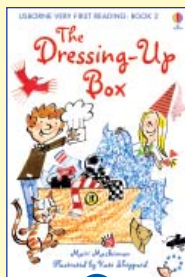
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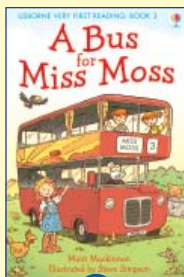




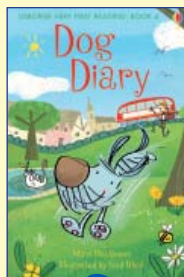
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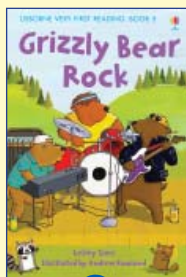
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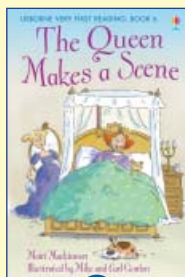
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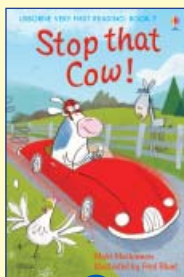
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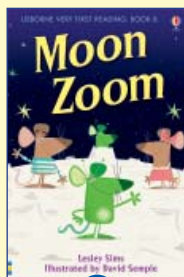
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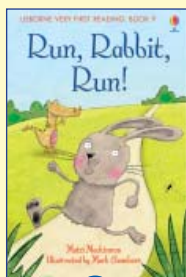
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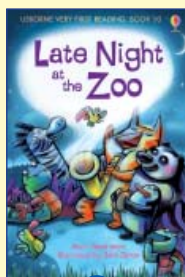
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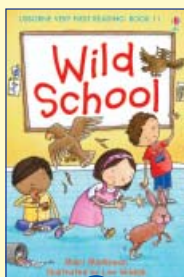
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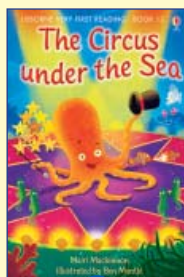
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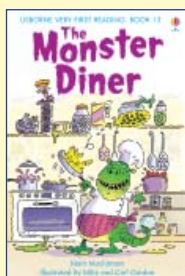
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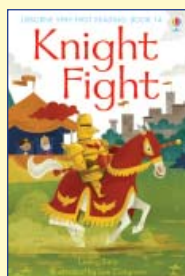
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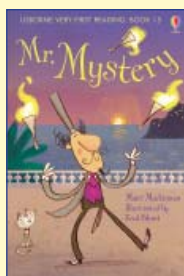
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# The Parents' Guide to Usborne Very First Reading



# About Very First Reading

**Usborne Very First Reading** is a series of fifteen books, specially developed for children who are learning to read. Each book builds on the material in previous books, and all the books combine lively rhyming stories with superb illustrations in a range of styles.

## Read at home, read at school

**Very First Reading** can be used either on its own or together with the method or scheme used by your child at school. It can easily be combined with many popular reading schemes.

## Shared reading

In the first seven books, adult and child take turns to read, with the child's share of the story becoming more substantial in each book. By book eight, the child reads the story and the adult is on hand to listen and help where needed.

Shared reading provides great support and motivation for beginner readers, allowing them to take part in an exciting story using very few words.



## Inspiring stories, fun puzzles

Each book contains an imaginative story with a theme that really appeals to children: animals, knights and castles, pirates and so on. After the story there are puzzles for the child to do with an adult's help. These test understanding of the story and provide further reading practice.

## Online support

You can also find plenty of support for the books on the Usborne website at [www.usborne.com/veryfirstreading](http://www.usborne.com/veryfirstreading)



## Supports UK Government policy

Schools across the UK now teach reading using a method called “synthetic phonics” (find out more about it on the next two pages).

**Very First Reading** follows the learning sequence in the UK Government programme **Letters and Sounds**. (Many other popular phonics courses follow the same sequence.) However, **Very First Reading** will also provide valuable reading practice if your child is using a non-phonics-based reading scheme at school.



# About synthetic phonics



use some phonics teaching in the early stages of reading.

## What is synthetic phonics?

Synthetic phonics involves learning to recognize the distinct sounds, or phonemes, that go together to make up words. There are 44 phonemes in the English language. Some phonemes correspond to a single letter, like the c-a-t sounds (“cuh-ah-tuh”) in the word “cat”, and others to combinations of letters, such as the sh-ar sounds in the word “shark”.

## How does it work?

Children start by learning just a few phonemes, then learn to combine these in order to read whole words (“synthesizing” the phonemes, or running them together, hence “synthetic phonics”). This gives them the confidence to tackle new and unfamiliar words, an important step towards independent reading. They are soon introduced to more phonemes, then learn different ways of spelling the phonemes they know.



**Usborne Very First Reading** introduces all the phonemes in a tried and tested order of progression, from simple letter-sounds to complex and variable spelling and pronunciation.

## Irregular words

Words can be divided into two basic groups: regular phonic words, such as “cat”, and words which are wholly or partly irregular.

Around 85% of words in English are regular, but some very common words, such as “I” and “the”, are irregular. These are sometimes called “sight words” or “tricky words”, and make up many of the 100 “high frequency words” that children have to learn in their first year at school. Each book in **Very First Reading** introduces one or two of these “tricky words”.

**Very First Reading** proves that it is possible to tell inspired, imaginative stories based on a rigorous phonic framework, giving children both the phonic skills and the motivation to become successful readers.



# Questions and answers



- **When should I start reading with my child?**

Every child is different, and you should take your cue from your own child. Do encourage an interest in books from the earliest age, reading aloud to your child and joining your local library. Look out for signs of “reading readiness”, when children start taking an interest in words they see around them – “Mum, what does that say?” – typically around four or five years of age.

- **My child has already started reading at school. Won't he get confused?**

**Usborne Very First Reading** closely supports the synthetic phonics methods used by many schools, and provides valuable reading practice even if your child is using a different method.

- **My child has been doing reading for over a year at school, but she doesn't seem to be getting anywhere. Will your books help?**

Many children find reading difficult in the early stages, for a variety of reasons that have nothing to do with intelligence or specific difficulties such as dyslexia.



Bright children can often seem to “plateau” once they have mastered the basics. **Very First Reading** provides a structured and methodical approach which teaches or reinforces basic phonic knowledge, enabling children to decode even unfamiliar words highly effectively.

- **My child can read a little already. Does he really need to start with Book One?**

You may find that it's reassuring to start at a level or two below your child's ability and progress quickly, and children will enjoy all the stories even if they find the text easy. If your child is familiar with all the letters of the alphabet, you could start with Book Four, and if he knows all the phonemes, try Book Seven.

- **I think my child may be dyslexic. Will these books be right for her?**

If you suspect your child has dyslexia, talk to her teacher or your doctor, who may suggest eyesight or hearing tests. In fact, many children with dyslexia find synthetic phonics methods particularly helpful, so the **Very First Reading** approach may well be what works best for her.



## Online help

The **Usborne website** offers a huge amount of additional help and support for parents and teachers using **Very First Reading**. Just go to [www.usborne.com/veryfirstreading](http://www.usborne.com/veryfirstreading) and you will find:

- general advice on teaching your child to read
- detailed information about the series structure
- an audio guide to pronouncing phonemes
- practice activities and games for each book.

## Our reading experts



**Alison Kelly** worked for many years as a primary school teacher, and is currently Principal Lecturer in English Education at the University of Roehampton. She is also the expert adviser on Usborne's **First Reading** and **Young Reading** series, which have sold over 10 million copies worldwide.



**Anne Washtell** has also worked as a teacher and a teaching advisor at the Centre for Literacy in Primary Education. She is currently Senior Lecturer in English Education at Roehampton, with a special interest in teaching phonics.

## Sample pages

On the following pages you can see sample pages from all 15 books in the series, and find out more about what your child will learn in each book.

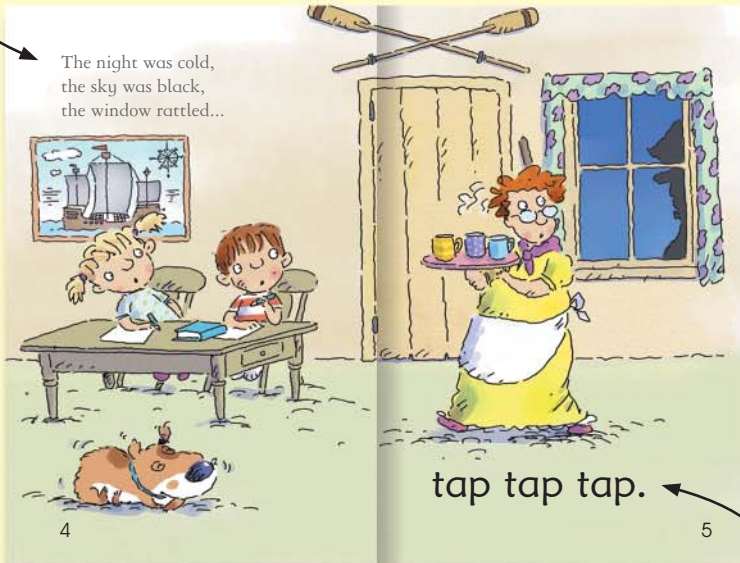


## Book One

# Pirate Pat

**Pirate Pat** allows the very beginner reader to take part in a lively and exciting story, using short sentences and simple words made up of only the letters **s a t p i n m d**. You read the first three lines on each double page, setting up a rhyming pattern, and your child then reads the last line.

You read these words.



Your child reads these words.

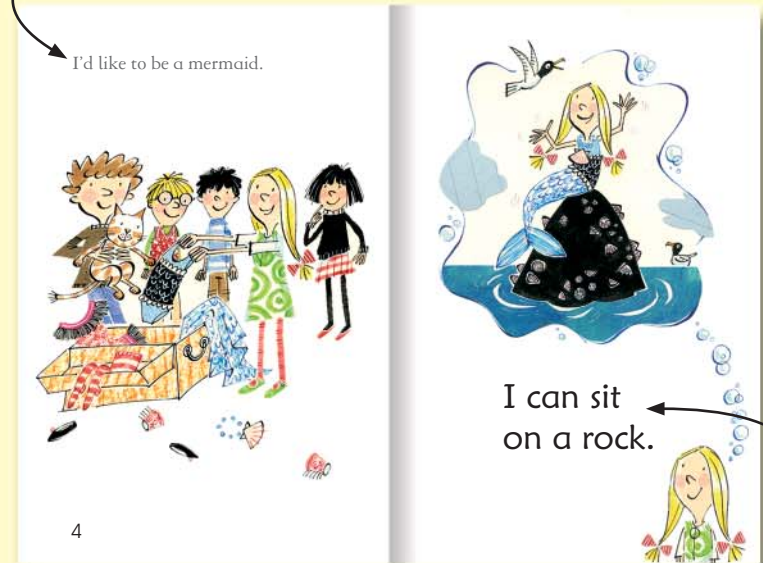
High frequency words:  
I in is it a

## Book Two

# The Dressing-Up Box

**The Dressing-Up Box** introduces the letters **g o c k c k e u r**. The sentences are a little longer, and your child reads more words overall. The repetition of “I can” on each double page helps to build your child’s confidence and increase reading stamina.

You read these words.



Your child reads these words.

High frequency words:  
at can get on up

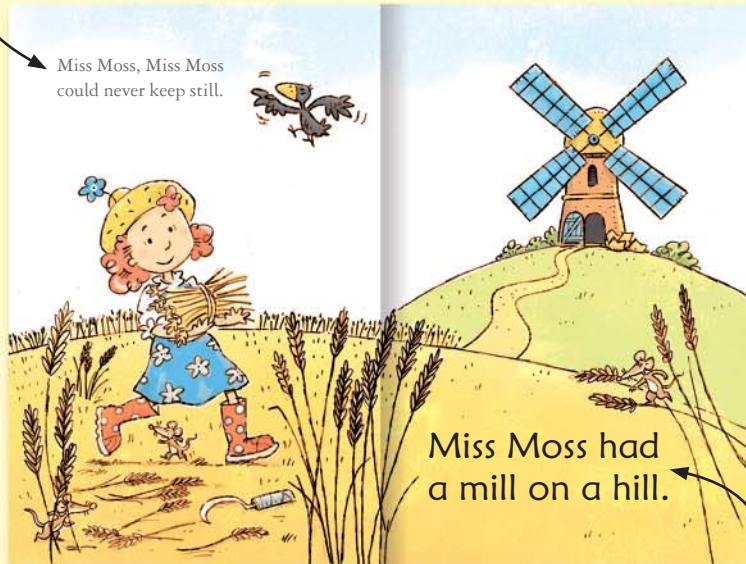


### Book Three

## A Bus for Miss Moss

A **Bus for Miss Moss** introduces the letters **h b l ll f ff ss**. Your child will now be reading longer sentences, strongly supported by the rhyme and rhythm of the story; by this stage, your child will be reading as much of the story as you are.

You read these words.



Your child reads these words.

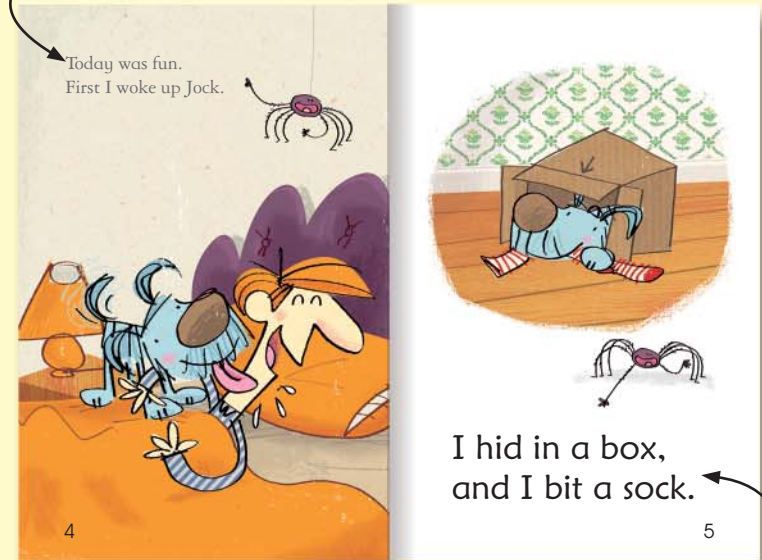
High frequency words:  
had if and of off go

### Book Four

## Dog Diary

**Dog Diary** introduces the letters **j qu v w x y z zz**. Your child will now be familiar with all the letters of the alphabet in their most regularly-pronounced forms, making it possible to read over 300 everyday words. This is a great achievement and boost to reading confidence.

You read these words.



Your child reads these words.

High frequency words:  
but not got no big to

## Book Five

# Grizzly Bear Rock

Grizzly Bear Rock introduces the useful letter-combinations ch sh ng and th. It's important for your child to learn to recognize these combinations and read them correctly as distinct sounds, not just read the sounds of the individual letters.

You read these words.



"I can hum,  
I can sing.  
Let me be in!"

Your child reads these words.

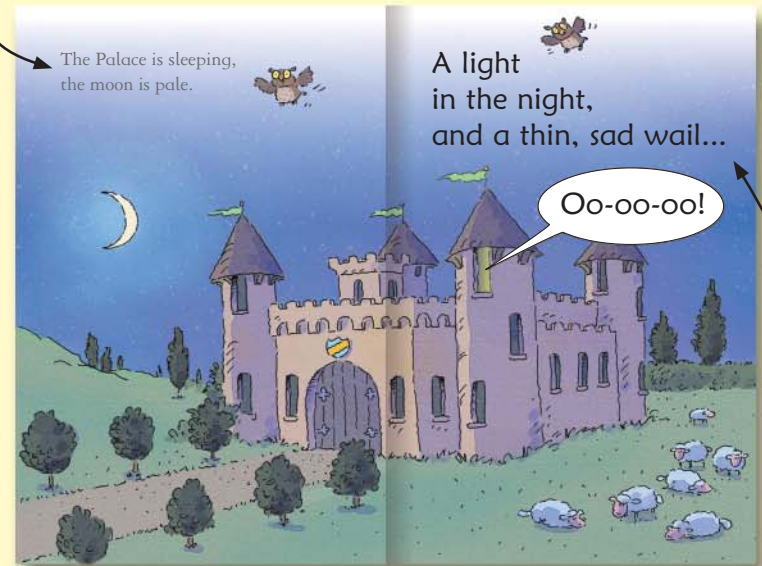
High frequency words:  
me be she the do so that will

## Book Six

# The Queen Makes a Scene

The Queen Makes a Scene introduces the letter-combinations ai ee igh oa oo (pronounced both as in book and as in moon). Again, it's important to learn to recognize these combinations. By this stage, your child will be reading about two-thirds of the story.

You read these words.



The Palace is sleeping,  
the moon is pale.

A light  
in the night,  
and a thin, sad wail...

Oo-oo-oo!

Your child reads these words.

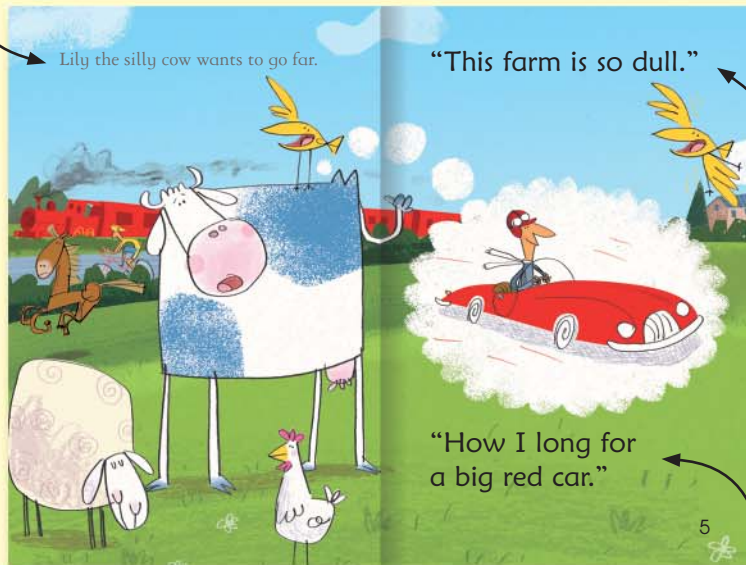
High frequency words:  
as he we look back then this too

## Book Seven

# Stop That Cow!

**Stop That Cow!** introduces the letter-combinations **ar or ur ow air ear ure**. Having learned these, your child will be familiar with almost all the sounds of English in their most regular spellings, making it possible to read over 700 everyday words with confidence.

**You read these words.**



**Your child reads these words.**

High frequency words:  
down for now oh

## Book Eight

# Moon Zoom

**Moon Zoom** introduces and practises longer words that begin or end with more than one consonant (**sleep, fills, speeds**) and simple two-syllable words (**rocket**). This stage almost doubles your child's reading vocabulary. Your child should now be trying to read the whole story, but may need help with a word here and there.



**Encourage your child to read all the words.**

High frequency words:  
into with

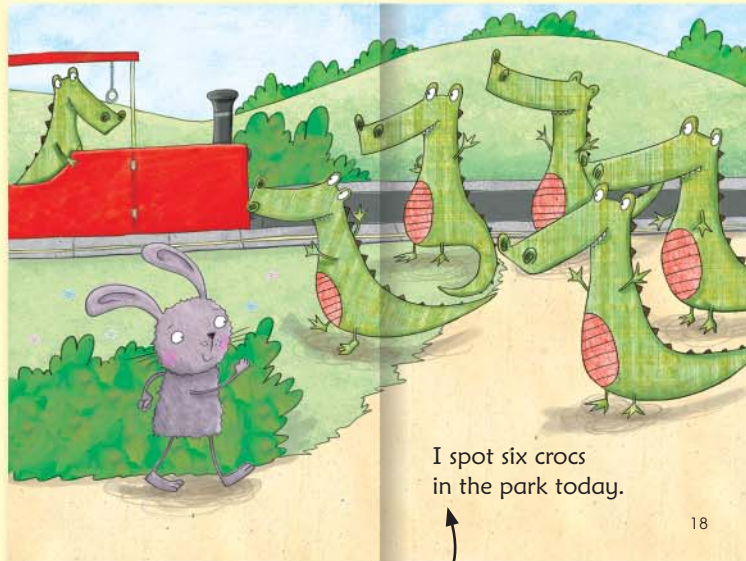


## Book Nine

# Run, Rabbit, Run!

Run, Rabbit, Run! introduces different ways to spell sounds your child has met in previous stories:

ai	ee	igh	oa	oo
ay	ea	ie	ow	ew
ey	e	y	oe	ue



Encourage your child to read all the words.

High frequency words:  
help just see they you

## Book Ten

# Late Night at the Zoo

Late Night at the Zoo introduces the pattern sometimes known as “the magic e”, where the final e changes the earlier vowel sound:

a e	e e	i e	o e	u e
late	these	time	home	tune



Encourage your child to read all the words.

High frequency words:  
are have it's like

## Book Eleven Wild School

Wild School introduces more ways to spell sounds your child has met in previous stories:

air	or	ur	ow	oi
are	our	er	ou	oy
ere		ir		



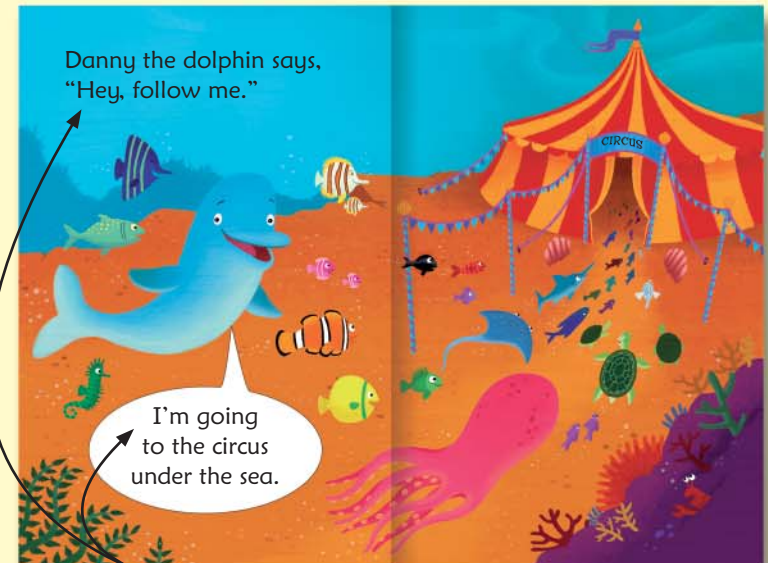
Encourage your child to read all the words.

High frequency words:  
there my your

## Book Twelve The Circus under the Sea

The Circus under the Sea introduces the "soft" pronunciation of c and g, as well as the combinations wh, ph and the final y sound.

ce/ci	ge/gi	wh	ph	-y
race	magic	whale	phone	Eddy



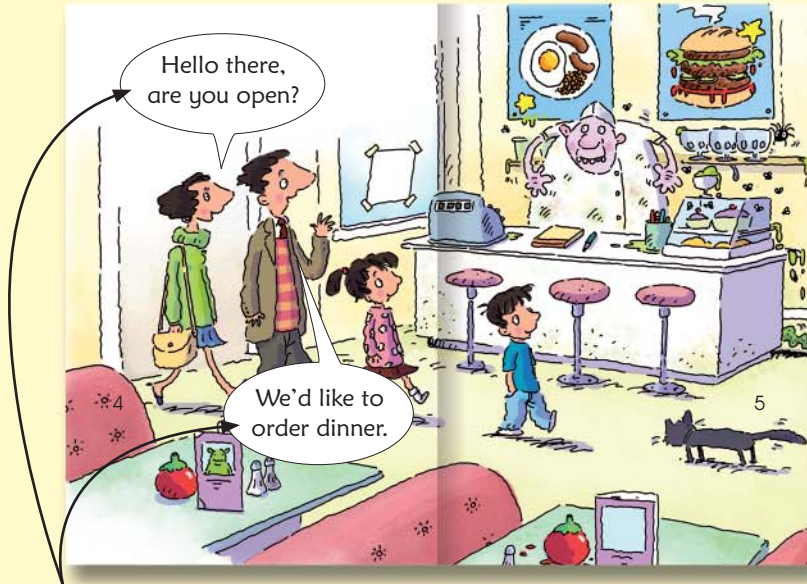
Encourage your child to read all the words.

High frequency words:  
day here I'm their them when

## Book Thirteen

# The Monster Diner

**The Monster Diner** introduces different ways of pronouncing letters or letter-combinations your child has already met in their more regular forms, such as **a** (as in **apricot**, **ask** or **was**), **i** (as in **kind**), **o** (as in **open** or **month**), **u** (as in **put**), **ea** (as in **bread**), **ear** (as in **earth**), **ie** (as in **shriek**) and **or** (as in **worm**).



Encourage your child to read all the words.

High frequency words:  
come don't old put was what

## Book Fourteen

# Knight Fight

**Knight Fight** introduces the "silent consonants" in combinations of letters such as **ch**, **gn**, **kn**, **ld**, **lm**, **mb**, **mn**, **rh**. These can often prove tricky, especially when it comes to spelling, and it's worth spending a little time to be sure of mastering them. By now your child will have a potential reading vocabulary of over 2,500 words.



Encourage your child to read all the words.

High frequency words:  
all people



## Book Fifteen

# Mr. Mystery

**Mr. Mystery** introduces combinations such as gh (silent, as in *though*, or pronounced “f”, as in *laugh*) and endings such as -sion and -tion. It also gives children practice in reading longer, three- or even four-syllable words. Your child will now have an excellent all-round foundation to develop reading independence and confidence.



Mr. Mystery came from a faraway land.

Encourage your child to read all the words.

High frequency words:

Mr. came from made children could his him little looked one some out said saw

## What next?

Once children have read all the titles in **Very First Reading**, they will have a sound basis to start reading more widely. **Usborne First Reading** provides a huge choice of stories and non-fiction, graded into four levels according to the length and difficulty of the text. Beautifully written and illustrated, they will support a child's reading development and continuing enthusiasm.

