

What should I do when my child makes a mistake while reading?

Question 7 from Helping Your Child Become a Reader
(Scanlon, Anderson, Barnes, Morse, & Yurkewecz-Stellato, 2024¹)

It is a good idea to let the child continue reading to the end of the sentence when they have misread a word. Often, by then, they will notice the mistake because they realize that the sentence doesn't make sense. A child who understands that reading is supposed to make sense will often go back and try to fix the error. This is exactly what we want children to do. When children begin to make these corrections, it is helpful to recognize their problem-solving success. For example, you might say: "Nice job figuring out that word!" or "You noticed that it didn't make sense and you went back and fixed it. You're really thinking like a reader!"

If a child reaches the end of a sentence and doesn't realize a mistake has been made, it is fine to point it out – especially if the mistake will make it hard to understand what's going on in the text. For example, you might say: "Nice reading, there was just one word that gave you a little trouble. Let's think about that word again." Alternatively, the child might be asked to identify which word they were unsure about. Or you might choose to simply provide the correct pronunciation of the word. The decision about how to respond would depend on the child's skills and knowledge about the word(s). For example, if the word is one that is totally unfamiliar to the child (e.g., *koala*, *relieve*), providing the pronunciation of the word and a brief explanation would be appropriate the first time the word comes up.



The general point is – don't be overly focused on accuracy or on having the child do all the work. You are not the teacher. In listening to beginners, your purpose should be to provide comfortable and non-stressful opportunities for the child to practice reading.

¹ The complete 23 question booklet can be accessed at: eltep.org/isa-parent-booklet
All individual questions and the complete booklet can be shared for non-commercial purposes.