

“Children are made readers on the laps of their parents.”  
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## Blame the Word, Not the Child

Asking a child to “Sound it out” is not always the simple task it seems. The following word pairs show how confusing the English language can be to decode:

home / some    cow / low    doll / roll  
paid / said    gone / done    horse / worse

Even phonics rules don't always apply. “When two vowels go walking, the first one does the talking,”—right? It works in “bead”, but what about “head”? In fact, that rule applies less than 50% of the time.

You can support your child by being aware that reading is complex. Don't insist on phonics unless the words are phonetically fair, and show your child how to use a balanced approach using the letters, what makes sense and what sounds right in a sentence.

Remember that it's safer to blame the word than the child.



## Mileage, Plus Fun

Children have fun learning sounds playing *Captain of My Ship*. First, the parent thinks of what an imaginary ship is filled with—for example, jelly beans. Begin with “I'm captain of my ship and my ship is filled with ‘J’s’.”

Now the kids take turns guessing what it is: “Jokes? That starts with ‘J’, but no!” “Pirates? Interesting, but that starts with P!” “Giraffes? Right sound, but that is spelled with a ‘G’!” Your responses do the teaching! The child who guesses the cargo wins a point, or a turn being Captain.

## Ask a Specialist

**Q** When I listen to my children read, I can't think of anything to say except “Good job.” What else should I be doing or saying?

**A** Observe their reading very carefully so you can be specific. Then try turning compliments into descriptions so your child is more likely to take them in. Here are some examples:

- I noticed how you used expression on this line!
- You went back and fixed that word! That's what good readers do.
- You stopped to figure it out!
- You stuck with that sentence until it made sense!
- You read that as smoothly as a newscaster!
- You tried to break up that tricky word!

## Online Resource for Parents of Multilingual Children

Go to [www.multilingualchildren.org](http://www.multilingualchildren.org) for language milestones, resources, news, research and products for families raising children to speak more than one language.