

# Parent's Guide to Accelerated Reader

Your child will be participating in the Accelerated Reader program. This guide is designed to answer your questions about Accelerated Reader. If you have additional questions, please feel free to contact your child's class teacher.

## What Is Accelerated Reader?

Accelerated Reader is a computer program that helps teachers manage and monitor children's independent reading practice. Your child picks a book at his/her own level and reads it at his/her own pace. When finished, your child takes a short quiz on the computer or Ipad. (Passing the quiz is an indication that your child understood what was read.) Accelerated Reader gives both children and teachers feedback based on the quiz results, which the teacher then uses to help your child set targets and direct on-going reading practice.

Children using Accelerated Reader choose their own books to read, rather than having one assigned to them. This makes reading a much more enjoyable experience as they can choose books that are interesting to them.

Teachers and teaching assistants help your child choose books at an appropriate reading level that are challenging without being frustrating, ensuring that your child can pass the quiz and experience success.

If your child does not do well on a quiz, the teacher may help him/her choose another book that is more appropriate or target them for additional support. If your child consistently does well, they will be moved along within their range (ZPD – see below).

## What is a Star Reading test?

Teachers determine your child's reading level to start Accelerated Reader by doing a **Star Reading test**. This is a **computerised reading assessment** that uses computer-adaptive technology. Questions continually adjust to your child's responses. If the child's response to a question is correct, the difficulty level of the next question is increased. If the child misses a question, the difficulty level of the next question is reduced. The test uses multiple-choice questions and takes approximately 20 minutes. These have all been done in school so we can start all the children off in the right place. These tests will be done again every half term or when needed to check progress and move children to new levels when required.

## What is an ATOS book level?

Book levels are reported using the ATOS readability formula and represent the difficulty of the text. The book level is assigned by accelerated reader – not the school. All the books now have stickers on the back to indicate the book level.

## What is a Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)?

In independent literature-based reading, ZPD is the range of books that will challenge a child without causing frustration or loss of motivation. Your child will receive a ZPD range after taking a Star Reading test. It is important for children to read with a high degree of comprehension and within their ZPDs so you may initially feel that some of the books may be easier for your child. This is because they need

to take a “quiz” (comprehension test) after each book so their understanding must be as good as their reading. If a child is achieving a high level of success, the teacher may ask them to take a new star reader test to see if they are ready to move up. All the books in school have now been labelled according to the book level and children will select from levels within their ZPD.

### **How much will my child read during the school day?**

According to research, children who read at least 20 minutes a day with a 90% comprehension rate (average percentage correct) on Accelerated Reader quizzes see the greatest gains. Therefore, your child will have at least 20 minutes set aside for reading during each school day. During this time they will be reading or completing a quiz as they have finished their book.

### **How can I help my child become a better reader?**

As with anything, performance improves with practice. In addition to reading in school, your child can bring their reading book home to continue reading (with longer books) or read again (with shorter books). They will however, do all the quizzes in school. Please encourage your child to read at home. When reading with your child, stop and ask questions to be sure your child understands what he/she is reading. Reading with your child, no matter what the child's age, is an important part of developing a good reader, building a lifelong love of reading and learning and creating a loving relationship between you and your child. Make reading a family affair!

### **What if my child does not like reading?**

Using Accelerated Reader, your child will choose the books he/she wants to read. The teacher will make certain the book is at the right level so that after completing the book, your child should do well on the Accelerated Reader Reading Practice Quiz. Success on the quiz will encourage your child to read more. With guidance from the teacher and success, even students who say they do not like reading will develop a love of reading.

### **I am concerned that my child will be unfairly compared to others.**

Then you will really like Accelerated Reader because it helps the teacher work with each child individually. Students using Accelerated Reader are encouraged to progress at their own pace and set their own targets with the help of the teacher. The aim of Accelerated Reader is for all children to succeed in achieving their targets.

### **What are points?**

Every book that has an Accelerated Reader Reading Practice Quiz is given a point value. Accelerated Reader points are calculated based on the difficulty of the book (ATOS readability level) and the length of the book (number of words). Children earn points, or a portion of a book's points, depending on how well they do on the Reading Practice Quiz. For example, a child who takes a 5-question quiz on a book worth 1 point will earn 1 point for 5 correct answers (100%), 0.8 point for 4 correct answers (80%), etc. A child who reads a book worth 5 points and takes a 10-question quiz will earn 5 points for 10 correct answers (100%), 4.5 points for 9 correct answers (90%), etc. For quizzes with 3, 5 or 10 questions, a child needs to pass a quiz with a score of 60% or higher to earn points. For quizzes with 20 questions, a child needs to pass with a score of 70% or higher to earn points.

You may notice that some popular books have more points assigned to them than some classic pieces of literature. J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*, for example, is a 44-point book, while Shakespeare's *Macbeth* is a 4-point book. Keep in mind that this does not mean we think *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix* is a better book or more worthwhile to read than *Macbeth*, only that, at 257,154 words versus 19,048 words, it is much longer and provides more reading practice time.

### **How are Accelerated Reader point targets set?**

Based on extensive research, we can provide guidelines for the approximate number of Accelerated Reader points children should be able to earn depending on how much time they read and their reading level. Monitoring Accelerated Reader points earned by children and comparing them to the guideline values enables your child's teacher to determine how well your child is using the time provided for reading practice. If the school has Star Reading, students' scores will be accessible in Accelerated Reader, making it easier for teachers to set point targets for students.

### **How many Accelerated Reader quizzes are there?**

There are over 30,000 Accelerated Reader quizzes available, with more being written every month. The quizzes are done on a computer or Ipad and are presented in a colourful and engaging way that the children enjoy.

### **What kinds of quizzes are there?**

Accelerated Reader includes several types of quizzes designed to support the development of several reading skills. **Reading Practice Quizzes** are the most common type of assessment in Accelerated Reader. The purpose of these quizzes is to determine whether your child has read a book, to measure your child's literal comprehension of the book and to provide immediate feedback. Each Reading Practice Quiz consists of 3, 5, 10 or 20 multiple-choice questions depending on book level and length.

### **Is it OK for my child to read outside of his/her reading level?**

Just because a child can read the words in a book does not mean the content is appropriate. The interest level of the material must be considered. Interest level is based on content - a book's themes and ideas - and indicates for which age group a book is appropriate. The chart below shows which ages fall into each interest level.

<b>Interest Level</b>	<b>Year Level</b>
LY - Lower Years	Ages 5-8
MY - Middle Years	Ages 9-13
MY+ - Middle Years Plus	Ages 12 and above
UY - Upper Years	Ages 14 and above

These are recommendations. It is the responsibility of teachers and parents to use their best judgment when guiding children to appropriate books.

In many cases, a book's interest level coordinates with its book level. Many books, however, have a low book level but are appropriate for upper years and vice versa. For example, both *Oscar, Cat-About-Town* by James Herriot and *Noughts & Crosses* by Malorie Blackman have a book level of 4.0 since both have short sentences and vocabulary that is simple. *Noughts & Crosses* is intended for older students; therefore, it is tagged as Upper Years, while *Oscar, Cat About-Town* is tagged as Lower Years.

### **My child already does well in school. Why does he/she need this?**

Even if a child is gifted at playing a musical instrument, the child has to practice to develop his or her talent. Bright children, like all children, need to be challenged. Teachers using Accelerated Reader software in their classrooms find it easy to guide each student to books that give the child both challenge and success, regardless of the child's level.

### **My child is not a strong reader. Can he/she still use Accelerated Reader?**

Accelerated Reader helps all children become better readers, from students with special needs to those who are gifted and talented. When children read books at an appropriate level, they experience success. Furthermore, teachers work with children to set appropriate targets based on each child's reading level.

### **How will I know how my child is doing?**

We will continue to use reading record books to keep a record of books read and quiz scores. You can check on this when reading with your child at home and you can still write in the record book when you hear you child read. We will also do regular half termly print outs of your child's progress that will show all the books read, scores on quizzes, number of points accumulated, number of words read and so on.