Helpful Hints

Show the kids your love of reading! On the first day, bring your favorite book to read aloud to the kids if there is time. Bring other types of texts: Favorite book from adulthood, favorite as a child, cookbooks, maps, newspapers, magazines, etc..

Build Rapport: On the first day, bring pictures of your family, talk about your favorites-food, snack, hobbies. Allow time for them to share about their lives. As you meet each week, ask children to share one thing about their week or weekend. If you have a chatty group, you may need to save this for the end of the session. Say, “I can’t wait to hear about your story. Let’s focus on our reading, and we’ll share at the end.”

Establishing Expectations: Children need structure and do better when they know what the expectations are. Involve your kids in making the rules for your group. Rules should be positively stated, general enough to address any undesired behaviors, and should be limited to 3-5 rules.

Ask, “What do you think we need to do to be successful during our group time? If you could make one rule for our group, what would it be?” Children will probably say, “Be good,” or, “Don’t hit.” Redirect their thinking by asking, “What does it mean to be good? What does it look like? Sound like?” Or, “Instead of saying don’t hit, what if we said, Keep all hands, feet, and objects to ourselves?”

Children can write their rule on a sticky note, or you can be the scribe and write down all of their ideas. Then, tell the group that you will reflect on their feedback and type up the official rules for your next meeting. At the start of the next group session, show the students the typed rules. Explain how you considered each of their ideas and combined them into the rules. Ask children to sign/write their name at the bottom of the rules like a contract.

Involving the children in the process will help them buy into the rules. Hopefully, they will be more motivated to work and be invested in the group’s success. Have the rules out every time you meet. The first few times, you may want to start your session by reviewing the rules with the group. You could set a goal for your group, “Today, let’s all focus on rule #3. Let’s work together as a team. What does it look like when we work together as a team? I’ll be really watching to see how well we work on this today. I know we can do it!”
**Praise and Redirection:** Be positive and praise your kids when they are following the rules. Use specific feedback when possible. Example: I noticed that you tried hard to figure out that word. I can tell that you paid attention to the story. Use a variety of praise instead of just saying, “Good job!”

Redirect them when they are not following the rules. Be consistent, calm, and fair. Example: “Joe, the rule is to listen and follow directions. I know you can do this. Show me that you can listen and follow directions.” If the child continues with undesired behavior, “Joe, this is your last warning. The rule is to listen and follow directions. You can choose to follow the rules and you will (get to stay in the group, get an initial on your bookmark, etc..), or you can choose not to follow the rules and you will (have to leave the group for today, lose a turn to read aloud, lose a chance to get an initial on your bookmark). What do you choose?” If the child chooses to stay and displays the desired behavior be sure to praise them.

**Examples of Rules:**
1. We will treat others the way we want to be treated by showing care, empathy, and respect.
2. We will be good communicators that listen and follow directions.
3. We will work together as a team.
4. We will work hard everyday and try our best to make good choices.

**Literacy Tips**

**Preview the book:** Show students the cover of the book or take a “picture walk” through the story before reading. Ask, “What do you think this book will be about just by looking at the front of the book?”

**Ask questions throughout the story and at the end to check for understanding:** Who are the main characters? Where the story is taking place? (i.e. on a farm, in outer space, in a house, outdoors, etc.) When does the story takes place? (i.e. in the future, in the morning, in the daytime or nighttime, etc.).

Review story elements: Characters, setting and plot (problem/solution) are very important to help children gain a better understanding of what they’re reading.

Phrases to use to check for understanding, “Can you tell me about what you just read?” “That had a lot of tricky words in it. Let’s make sure we understand what we just read. What just happened in this part of the story?”
Teach and use comprehension strategies: Connecting, Predicting, Visualizing, Wondering/Questioning, Summarizing, Inferring

Connecting: Discuss what’s happening in the story and try to relate it to another book, to your child’s life, to a family event, an event in school, or relate it to a movie or T.V. show. “This reminds me of...”

Predicting: What do you think will happen next? How will this story end? “I think he will...” “I predict she’s going to...”

Visualizing/Picturing: Create mental images. Read a portion of the book and ask children to close eyes to visualize while reading. What do you see, taste, hear, smell, or touch when you read this.

Wondering/Questioning: What are you curious about while reading? What is confusing? “I wonder...”

Summarizing: Most children’s stories have some type of problem for the main character. The main character has to find a solution to the problem usually with the help of other characters. Use the strategy, “Somebody Wanted But So Then” to help children summarize a story. Example: Cinderella (somebody) wanted to go to the ball, but (problem) her mean step-mother tried to stop her from going to the ball. So, (solution) Cinderella’s fairy Godmother helped her go to the ball and she met the prince. Then, they lived happily ever after.

Inferring: Use background knowledge or schema with clues in the book to make an inference. Infer how a character is feeling, why things happen, where characters are, and what is happening. For example: I infer that the character is sad because she is crying and the words I just read said that the little girl lost her favorite toy.

If your child comes across unfamiliar words
Try to help them figure out the word by breaking the word into parts or chunks, use context clues, flip the sound-decide whether the word has a long or short vowel sound, say the beginning sound of the word, use the picture for help, back up re-read the sentence before, keep reading the next sentence and come back to the word, or use a word that makes sense. Encourage children to self-monitor by asking, “Did that sound right? Did that make sense?” Younger children may
benefit from using their finger underneath the words to help them track their reading and stay focused.

It is important especially for struggling readers that you correct them when they read a word incorrectly. You can point to the word and say, “What is this word?” If a child struggles, encourage them to use a strategy to figure it out. If the child can’t figure out the word, then provide the word for the child. Don’t spend too long on unknown words. Once you have clarified the word, have the child back-up and reread the sentence from the beginning with the corrected word.

**Modeling/Thinking-Aloud:** Model your love of reading (even if you don’t love to read-fake it). Talk about your favorite books growing up, memories of being read to, learning to read, and books you are reading now. Model what a fluent reader sounds like. Think aloud while reading. Share your predictions, wonders, connections, etc…

**More advanced readers:** Encourage them to read fluently by paying attention to punctuation, adding emotion/feeling into reading, interpret author’s meaning. Collect and discuss new vocabulary. Students can respond to prompts or questions in reading notebook. Example: While reading stop 2 times during your reading to write down a connection you have to the book.