



## Hal's Reading Diary ? September 2009

Article Author:

[Roger Mills](#) [1]

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Hal's Diary and Baby Diary

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**Roger Mills** finds an exciting plot helps.

With growing confidence and improved reading skills, Hal will now read on voluntarily when caught up in an exciting plot. His father, psychodynamic counsellor **Roger Mills**, explains.

It is pretty much a truism to say that when you live with a child you don't really notice them grow. It's only when the friend that rarely visits sees them and says 'My goodness. You've shot up?' that you realise they've put on a few inches. Noticing progress in reading skills can be rather similar. The developments happen slowly, silently, beneath the radar.

As far as Hal's reading is concerned, I've recently been in the position of the visiting friend. Largely because of having to see clients in the early evening, I haven't been much involved in Hal's reading sessions of late. So it was with some surprise that I witnessed him in action with Jo the other night and realised, suddenly, how much his reading had progressed.

The first, most obvious shift was a new level of confidence. Watching him read, it immediately became clear that the lexicon of words he knows by sight and doesn't have to spell out has expanded significantly. Words like 'temperature?', 'enormous?' and 'screeching?' for example were pronounced without hesitation, a far cry from the painstaking spelling out and fathoming out of a few months ago.

There is a change in his attitude to being helped too. Until recently Hal has usually been eager for help the moment he became becalmed on a difficult word. Not so now. These days he doesn't even like having someone sitting looking at the book with him, preferring to read it on his own. And if he does get stuck, he'll make a very decent fist of trying to work it out before appealing for adult help.

Probably the greatest change of all though is a new level of enthusiasm. Reading one of the **Astrosaurs** books Hal reached a passage that was really exciting. As the pace of the action increased, so did the pace of the reading. And being excited by what he was reading, Hal pressed on beyond the five pages that he had originally agreed to read (OK he's still fairly bibliophobic) and pressed on to the end of the chapter. Hal noticed his own excitement and commented on it. 'When the story got faster, my reading went faster too, didn't it?' he said. Here was a small boy who was clearly having fun.

One of the things therapists often look for is negative vicious circles. You are frightened of doing something so you avoid it. Avoiding it, the thing feels even more intimidating. So you avoid it some more. Something similar has been happening with Hal's reading. He thought he couldn't do it so he avoided it. He thus continued to feel that it would be too difficult for him. Now though, he seems to be beginning to reverse the vicious circle. There is an emerging 'Hey, I think I can do this?' attitude. With this positive attitude there's less avoidance ? he's even reading extra pages. And with less avoidance there's more confidence building experience of reading and more fun as well. Hal is still not picking up books for his own recreation. But they certainly aren't as intimidating to him as they used to be.

**Astrosaurs** titles by Steve Cole are published in paperback by Red Fox.



[Hal 2009 outside cottage.jpg](#) [3]

Hal outside cottage - 2009

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