Box of tricks – A box filled with props adds a magical twist to guided reading time. Reading glasses (without the lenses) helps the reader focus. Or, even better, make your own reading glasses masks! Magnifying glasses help the reading detectives find evidence within the text, from searching for punctuation to looking for sounds. A finger torch adds a fun twist to finding words. Transparent, coloured overlays of various colours are also a wonderful addition to the box. Children will often find that it makes the words on the page clearer.

Sticky notes – Sticky notes are always handy to have around whether you use them for ‘notes to self’ or as a quick way to write down progress observations to add to a child’s profile at a later date. For the children, they’re great to help them find evidence in the text and marking the spot; jotting down any words that they are struggling to understand; writing questions about the text that they may have; noting observations about characters; covering words and getting children to predict what word is covered. The list is endless.

Question dice and spinners – By making use of custom-made (aka homemade) dice or spinners, you can quickly expose the pupils to a number of different question types. Questions to write on the spinners/dice could include; what is happening in the story?; what do you think is going to happen next?; how would you change the story?; how does the story make you feel?; why do you think the character responded in that way? For an extra bit of spice, you could include a ‘question of the week’. Give the readers the challenge to create questions that will get everyone thinking. The best question wins a space on the spinner/dice!

And the winner is… – Starting a new book is exciting. Begin with the front cover. If there are different versions of the covers available, bring copies to show to the group. The readers can write down their predictions, based on the covers, about what they think the story will be about. They can put their predictions into a sealed envelope, to open when they have finished the book. Upon completion of the story, the envelopes can be opened and the success of the cover can be revealed! The readers can then design a cover that would give a 100% correct prediction rate!

Empathy sticks – Briefly discuss tone i.e. the way you express yourself, and different types of tone. Options could include: humorous, nasty, angry, apologetic, defiant, optimistic, and worried. Give each reader lolly sticks with circles pasted at the top. The readers should then choose a different tone and, in each circle, draw different facial expressions, creating their own ‘emojis’. You can then use the ‘Tone faces’ in a number of different ways. The readers can choose a tone that they will use when they are reading. Alternatively, when another member of the guided reading group is reading, they can hold up the tone that they think is being used or should be used.