

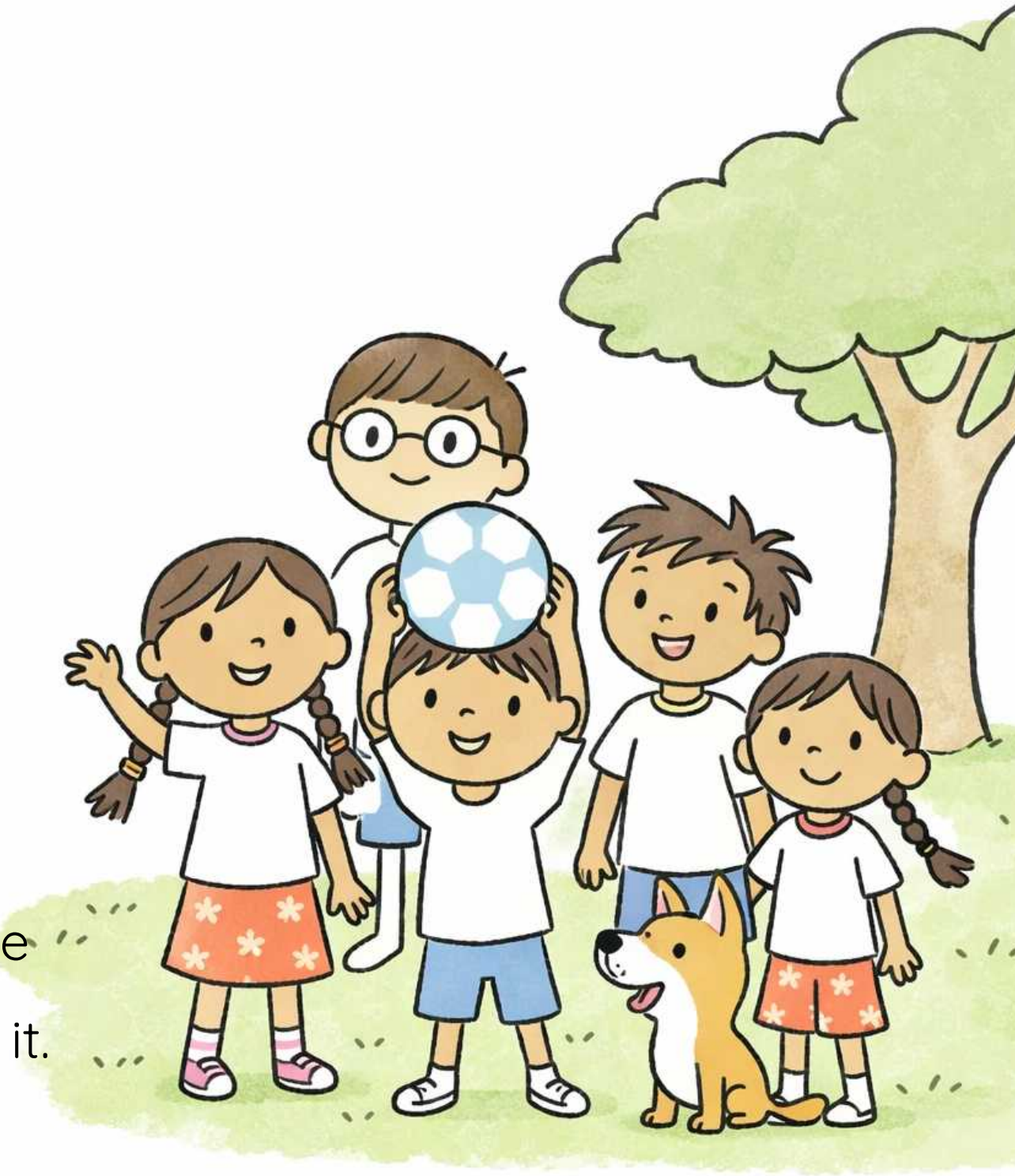
Back It Up, Squad!



This is **my** squad. Five kids, one dog, and no way we can fail. That is **my** big claim.

'Big claim,' says Girl with Braids. 'Back it up.'

I grip the ball up **high** and grin. The sun is **bright**. The big cup game is here, and we can win it.





Girl with Braids gets the ball first. She gets it first each **time**. She **flies by** the shrubs so fast they shake. We all sprint and pant after her. The Dog zooms **by** her **side**, tail up. 'Too slow!' she yells back. She is right.

Boy with Glasses is not fast. He has a **sly** trick, and that is better.

He flicks the ball left, then right, then spins so quick I trip on **my** own feet. When I look up, he is out of **sight**.

'How can he do that?' I ask. No kid can tell.



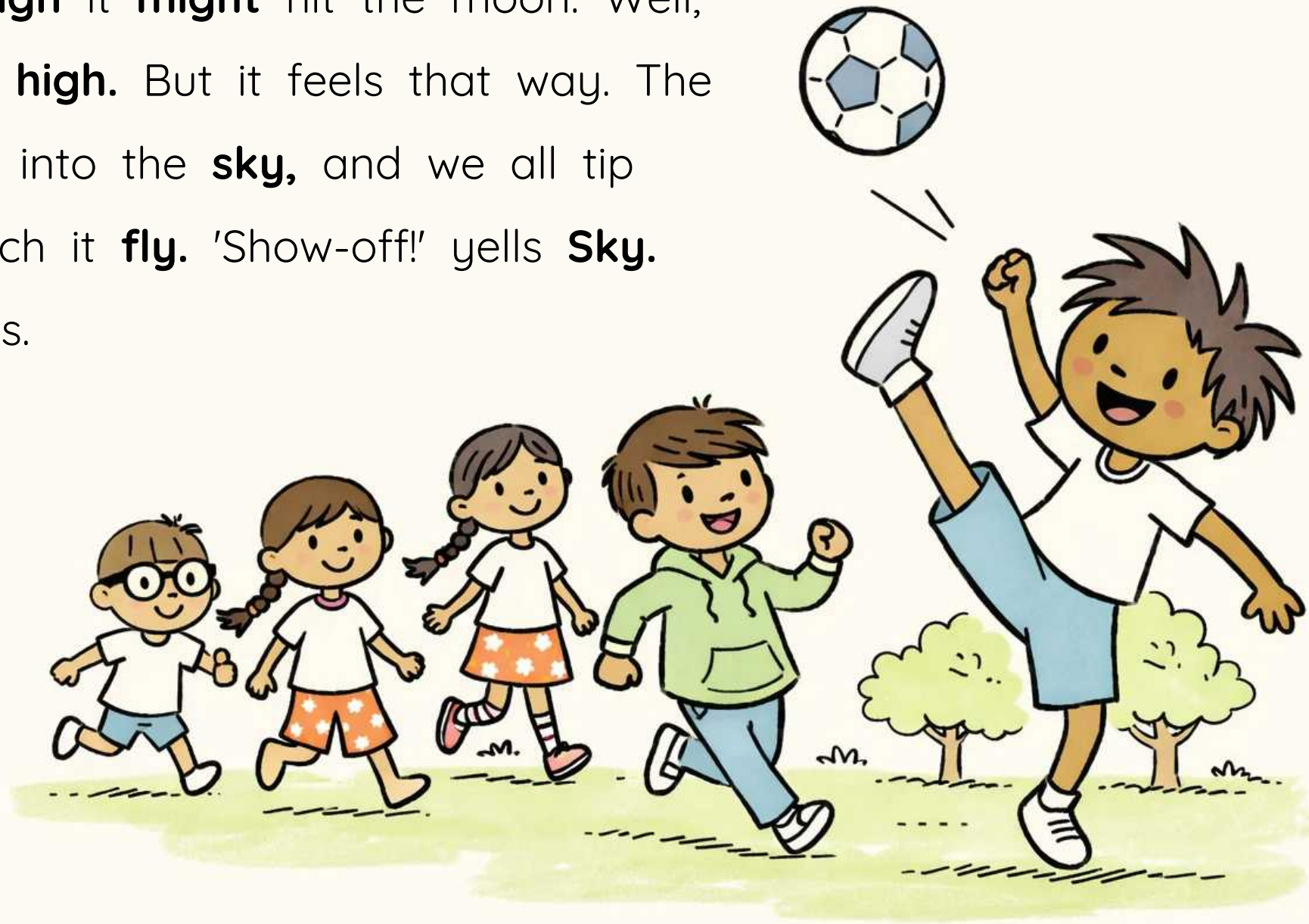


My turn. I have just one skill, but it is a good one.

Bang! **My** foot smashes the ball so hard it **flies like lightning**. It hits the net before the goal kid can blink.

I **try** not to grin. I fail.

Then **High** Kicker Boy steps up. He swings his leg so **high** it **might** hit the moon. Well, no, not that **high**. But it feels that way. The ball sails up into the **sky**, and we all tip back to watch it **fly**. 'Show-off!' yells **Sky**. But she grins.





Sky has no need for feet.
She jumps up **high** and
bonk! The ball zips off
her brow **like** a jet.

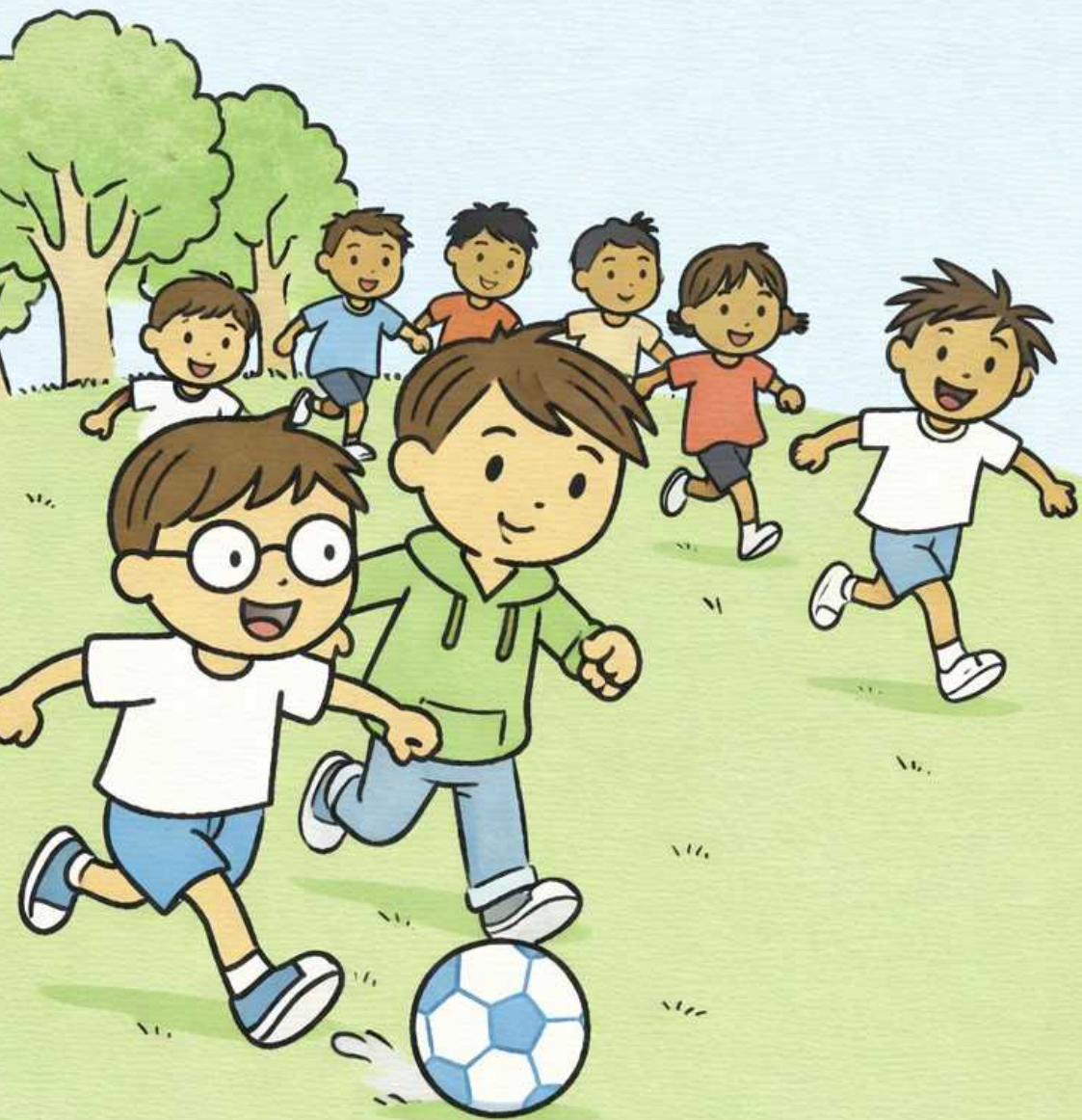
She is at the park each
day, rain or **shine**. Bonk,
bonk, bonk. 'One day,' she
says, 'I will bonk a ball
so hard it goes into orbit.'
We trust her.

The coach nods at us,
and we run onto the
turf, fit for a **fight**.

Then the other team's
bus stops. Out come
the biggest kids I have
seen in **my life**. What
a **sight**. What a **fright**.

My squad is still. The
Dog stops barking too.





This team is good. So good.

They pass fast, and each **time** we get the ball, they

grab it back. Boy with

Glasses **tries** his spin trick.

They block it. I **try my**

mighty shot. The goal kid
grabs it.

'What can we do?' whispers
Girl with Braids.

'We play **like** a squad,' I say.

And that is just what we do.

Boy with Glasses gets to the ball just in **time**. He flicks it to Girl with Braids. She sprints and sends it **high** to **Sky**. Bonk! Off her brow it **flies**, right to me.

One tap. One shot. The net shakes.





Goal! We jump up and punch the **sky**. Girl with Braids grabs **my** arm. **High** Kicker Boy yells so loud the **sky might** shake. The Dog barks and barks and barks. The other team is big. The other team is fast. But **my** squad trusts each other, and they do not have that. And no kid can bark **like** the Dog. Go, squad, go!



Back It Up, Squad!

Five kids, one dog, and a squad captain who just made a big claim: no way they can fail. Girl with Braids is fast, Boy with Glasses has a sly trick, and High Kicker Boy can send the ball sailing into the sky. But when the biggest, toughest team they've ever faced steps off the bus, will this scrappy squad find a way to back up their big talk? Written for Jolly Phonics classrooms (Step 3, Unit 6: /ie/ mixed), this book practices words like 'sky', 'flies', 'sight', 'mighty', 'lightning'.

Phonics Focus: <mixed>

bright, by, fight, flies, fly, fright, high, life, lightning, like, might, mighty, my, shine, side, sight, sky, sly, time, tries, try

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