



## Ideas and Activities to Help You Read to Your Child

It is best to read to your child early and often, but it's never too late to begin! Start today! Although the activities in this section are designed to enhance reading aloud with preschoolers and beginning readers, a child is never too old or too young to be read to.

With children, remember that teaching reading is a physical act, as well as a mental one. It involves hand-eye coordination. So, when you read, involve your child by:

- Pointing out objects in the pictures
- Following the words with your finger (so that your child develops a sense that the words go from left to right on the page)
- Having your child help turn the pages (to learn that the pages are turned from right to left)
- Ask open-ended questions that require more than a one or two word response (for example - "Why do you think that Goldilocks tried all three chairs?")

Keep in mind that when a parent recites a rhyme, sings a song or tells a story to their child, a reading readiness program has begun. These poems, songs and stories help the child to hear the similarities and differences in the sounds of words.

Next to be taught are the names of the letters and the sounds different letters represent. Then, as the child's motor skills increase, parents can teach their child to trace and write letters and numbers. By this time, the child should already be able to recognize the shapes of the letters and numbers. The child then learns to associate sounds with the different letters of the alphabet.

During this time, continue to point out words found in our day-to-day environment (business signs, stop signs, words on cereal boxes, etc.) while reading aloud to the child. Research shows that reading aloud is the number one way to introduce the fun and enjoyment of reading to a child.

The key is to find books you both love. They will shape your child's first impression of the world of print and reading. It is ok if your child wants to read the same book over and over. The repetition increases comprehension skills.



### What to Do

1. Ask friends, neighbors and teachers to share the names of their favorite books. Books can be read in English, as well as other languages.
2. Visit your local public library, and as early as possible, get your child a library card. Also, ask the librarian for help in selecting books.
3. Look for award-winning books. Each year the American Library Association selects children's books for the Caldecott Medal for illustrations and the Newbury Medal for writing.
4. Check the book review sections of newspapers and magazines for recommended new children's books. Also, an internet search can generate a useful list of age appropriate books for your child's enjoyment.
5. As soon as he/she is old enough, have your child join you in browsing for books and making selections.
6. If you and your child do not enjoy reading a particular book, put it aside and pick up another one.

After a parent has modeled the reading habit, it is very common for a child to try to tell part of the story and then attempt to read books with parents and on his/her own. The child will certainly remember parts of favorite stories and try to sound out unfamiliar words. The more the child practices, the more adept the child will become in recognizing familiar words quickly and easily. It is at this time that a child will pick up what linguists describe as a "sense of the language". This refers to the recognition of patterns of spelling and the patterns of words as they appear in sentences.

Also, attention will be given less and less to letters and isolated words and more and more to the meaning of words, sentences and the complete text.

A key component to the process of reading is the child's ability to identify specific oral word sounds and associate those sounds with the combination of letters we call written words. Practice makes perfect. As the word and sentence patterns are seen, recognized and recalled, the child begins to read with relative ease and confidence. Reading is a skill and, as with any skill, it will improve with practice.

Always keep in mind that your child's reading level and listening level are different. Also, when you read easy books, beginning readers will soon be reading along with you. When you read more advanced books, you will instill a love of stories and you build the motivation that transforms children into lifelong readers.