

Never STOP READING!

Ideas for reading aloud with your children

As a parent, you can help your children develop and maintain a love of reading – and that helps them develop a love of learning.

When you read aloud at home with your children, the experience creates memories and feelings for them of belonging and being safe. It also helps your children learn new things, think about others' ideas, and question the world around them.

Reading is for enjoyment as well as for learning. Here are some ideas to support your children to see reading as an interesting and enjoyable thing to do.

- Talk with your child about what you are reading before you start. For example, if the story is set in another country, talk about something you know about that country such as the food or a well-known building or what people wear. You could also talk about questions that you have.
- Ask your child to predict what they think is going to happen and why they think that. They can get ideas from the book title, the cover page, from the pictures and diagrams, and from the events as they unfold in the story.

Before you start reading

- Make yourselves comfortable, be relaxed and not rushed. Really settle down to enjoy the experience!
- When you read a familiar book, ask your child if they can remember what happened last time you read the book, and get them to listen out for particular characters and events.
- When you read a new book, look through it beforehand so you know the words, concepts and situations you can talk about.

While you are reading

- Read aloud at a comfortable pace that gives your child time to build a picture in their minds of what they are hearing. Imagination is a powerful way of learning.
- If the book has illustrations, give your child time to look at them. This can be a time to expand their vocabulary by learning new words. For example, "David looks 'apprehensive' in the picture, doesn't he? 'Apprehensive' is being nervous about something that might happen." You could also talk about words with a similar meaning to apprehensive – for example, worried, concerned, doubtful...

Children are born ready to learn and, right from birth, benefit greatly from being wrapped into a parent's warm embrace while sharing the sounds, language patterns and images of a storybook on a favourite topic. Even after children can read for themselves they continue to benefit from (and enjoy) sharing books with their parents. So never stop reading to them.





- In non-fiction books, information is often presented in both words and pictures. Stop at the diagrams, maps, tables and photographs – and encourage your child to talk about what they can learn from them.
- Where a story allows, stop and share reactions and thoughts. For example “I wonder how <the main character> feels about that?”
- Children love to hear personal stories so share your stories when you can during your reading. For example, “That happened to me once and....”
- Give your child the chance to respond to and ask questions about the book.
- If you’re not reading the whole story in one sitting, end on a part of the story that is exciting or dramatic so your child can’t wait to find out what happens next.
- Encourage your child to take a turn at reading some of the book but don’t insist.
- Have fun with your voice. Speak in a squeaky voice when the character is a mouse and a gruff voice if a character is angry. Make the sound effects like “buzz” and “boom” to bring the story alive. In sad parts talk in a slower, lower voice; and for happy parts, talk in a faster, more excited voice.

When you finish reading

- Talk with your child about what you’ve just read. For example “What did the story make you think of?” If it was non-fiction, “Tell me something new that you learnt.”
- Talk about the facts or events from the book as well as the characters, images and meaning. “I noticed...”, “I pictured...”, “I liked... (or “I didn’t like...)...” and “I wonder whether...” Ask your child what they noticed, pictured, liked/didn’t like and wondered.
- Encourage your child to express their own opinions and say why they think that.
- Ask your child questions to get them thinking and talking. Use open ended questions rather than questions needing just a yes or no answer. For example “Why do you think this character would be a good friend?” or “What would you do in that situation?” or “What else do you know about frogs?”
- Link events from the story to things that your child already knows or has experienced.
- Encourage your child to re-tell the story or draw a picture – or even act out parts of the story.
- Talk about the story at other times, in general conversations.

Never Stop Reading! encourages families to read aloud even when their children can read by themselves.

Research shows that reading aloud improves children’s knowledge and vocabulary, as well as their writing and comprehension. By listening to their children read aloud, families are supporting their children’s learning, and increasing their confidence and sense of security.

Reading to, and with children, also has social and emotional benefits – promoting a positive mood and sense of wellbeing.

The terms ‘book’ and ‘story’ are used generally to refer to what you are reading and what it is about. You can read aloud with your children anywhere – at home and out and about – and use a range of items including books, brochures, song lyrics and cookbooks.