



Ready To Learn

Reading With Your Children

Reading is a rich and rewarding experience for young children. When children are read to and “read” to themselves, they:

- ✓ Develop basic early reading, early writing, listening, and language skills.
- ✓ Learn new words and concepts.
- ✓ Understand that written words communicate ideas and information.
- ✓ See the connection between the sounds they hear and the words and illustrations they see.
- ✓ Explore new places, things, events, and lifestyles.
- ✓ Exercise their imaginations and creativity.



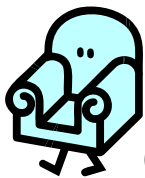
Make Children’s Books Come Alive

Reading with your children every day can foster a life-long love of books. However, reading out loud is not easy for everyone. To improve your skills and increase your children’s enjoyment of books, try the following tips:

- ✘ **Practice reading out loud to yourself.** Pick two or three children’s books and read them out loud to yourself several times. Change your voice to represent the different characters. Try recording yourself on a tape recorder and listen to it. Does the tone of your voice express how the characters are feeling? Does your voice sound exciting and interesting?
- ✘ **Choose a regular reading time.** Be sure to pick a time of day when the children are energetic, alert, and ready to concentrate.
- ✘ **Introduce the children’s book.** Show the children the book cover, and read the title, author, and illustrator. Ask them what they think the story might be about.
- ✘ **Show your Children the Pictures, and talk about them.** Ask open-ended questions. For example, “Have you ever been to a place that looks like the one in the picture? Have you ever seen animals like the ones in the story?” Help the children name all of the things they see in the pictures.

- ✘ **Use body language.** Emphasize certain words, mimic events, and represent the character's feelings with facial expressions and body movements.
- ✘ **Encourage your children to talk about the story while you're reading.** Children need to listen in order to hear the story, but they should also feel free to ask questions, point things out, and guess what might happen next.
- ✘ **Invite the children to tell and act out the story as you read it.** This will help them stay involved and excited.
- ✘ **Read you children's favorite books over and over again.** When children are familiar with a story, they can participate by 'reading' along with you and role-playing the different characters in the story. Encourage the children to say the lines with you, make sound effects, and imitate the action. Familiar books also encourage children to 'read' to themselves, which is a key part of learning.
- ✘ **Make sure your children are interested in the book.** If the children aren't listening or responding enthusiastically to your reading, don't make them 'sit through' two or three books. Instead, let them move on to other activities, and try reading at another time.
- ✘ **Invite the children to talk about the story after hearing it.** Help them connect it to their own experiences by asking open-ended questions. Did the story remind them of anything that has happened to them? What would they have done if they were one of the characters in the story?
- ✘ **Extend the book time with related activities.** Invite the children to draw pictures about the story, collect objects that were in the story, or role-play scenes from the story.

Reading children's books is most effective when it is a cooperative effort between you and your children!



Create Children's Reading Spaces

Books introduce children to special worlds. That's why reading spaces should be special places where children can escape into the wonderful world of books!

- ✘ **Set up a Read Aloud space.** Choose an area of your room where you'll read to the children every day. Make sure it's comfortable and large enough for small groups of children. If you can, put out pillows and mats during reading time.

- ✘ **Set up a Read Alone space.** Give the area a special name, such as the “Children’s Book Nook,” and make Reading Alone time a regular part of the daily schedule. Here are some ways to make Read Alone space inviting to your children:
 - ✓ Choose a quiet corner or an area that’s apart from the rest of the room. You can make the space feel separate by using a low bookcase or putting down a rug.
 - ✓ Make sure there are comfortable places to sit, and that there’s plenty of light.
 - ✓ Include a large selection of new and familiar children’s books. Display the books where children can easily reach them. Stand the books upright, with the covers facing out for the children to see.
 - ✓ Provide puppet dolls and other props for the children to use as they read to themselves.



How to Select Children’s Books

There are more children’s books than you could probably read in a lifetime. How do you know which books are good for young children and which ones should remain on the bookshelves? Here are some important guidelines.

- ✘ **Choose books based on your children’s interests, abilities, and ages.** Think about what your children like to do and read about, how long they can concentrate on a story, and what kinds of stories appeal to them.
- ✘ **Opt for children’s books that have interesting stories and information.** If the book has a story, the plot should be simple and easy to follow, as well as exciting. If it’s an informational book, it should describe the subject matter in simple words and pictures.
- ✘ **Choose children’s books that celebrate the sounds of language.** Rhymes, catchy phrases, and word-plays are not only fun, but they’re also wonderful tools for developing children’s listening and thinking skills.
- ✘ **Include a variety of kinds of children’s books in your collection.** It’s important that your children are exposed to different types of literature, such as poetry, folk tales, picture books, fairy tales, song books, informational books and predictable language books.
- ✘ **Check that all the characters in the book are represented positively.** Read the book carefully to see that it doesn’t include racial or gender stereotypes. For example, avoid stories in which only the boys are decision-makers or play active games while the girls are passive and only play with dolls.

- ✘ **Make sure that the books positively represent people of various cultures, races, and social backgrounds.** The world is full of differences, and the books you select need to reflect and value how we are all special and unique. Your library should include a number of children’s books featuring characters of many cultural and ethnic groups, for example, Caribbean’s as well as African-Americans. Through the world books, let your children meet the array of peoples from Europe, Africa, and the Near East. Read about the different American Indian nations and cultures. Introduce the children to the large Latino world that includes people from the Caribbean, South and Central America, as well as from Spain. If you already have a book about Japanese family, look for books about other Asian groups, such as Koreans or Chinese.

- ✘ **Make sure that different types of family structures and lifestyles are represented in your children’s books.** Children will see that any group of people who live together, love each other, and care for each other is a family.

- ✘ **Make sure your library reflects the world in which we live.** Include in your collection books about the wide variety of experiences, people, places, and events that children should learn about.

- ✘ **Add multi-media packages to your collection.** Cassette and book packages allow children to enjoy reading books without the assistance of an adult. Videotapes of books also enable children to enjoy book reading on their own, and can show you new reading aloud techniques.



Work with Your Local Library

Libraries are one of our nation’s greatest resources. Visit your local library and meet the librarian. If you don’t already have a library card, be sure to get one—it’s free! Here’s a couple of ways to use your local library.

- ✘ **Set up a regular time for your groups to visit the library.** You can use these trips to return children’s books and take out new ones. Make sure to give the children enough time to look through the books, and include them in choosing which books to check out.

- ✘ **Arrange for the librarian to read to your children.** Children enjoy listening to different storytellers and the activity will make them look forward even more to their library trips. And you may pick up a few tips to improve your storytelling skills. If you can’t take your group to the library, try to arrange for the librarian to visit your child care program.

