



Tips on

Reading

And Sharing Stories
With Young Children



The smartest thing you can tell children is a story. Here are some tips to create your own special storytime with your children.

Why is reading with children important?

One of the most important things you can do to help prepare children to succeed in school is to read with them. Reading aloud to children:

- Stimulates their minds
- Strengthens their imaginations
- Makes them curious about the world
- Strengthens language skills
- Helps them understand and learn new words
- Helps them learn about how print and books work
- And it is fun!

To Get Started...

- ✓ **Make the reading time special.** Turn off the TV, radio, or anything that will distract from your time together.
- ✓ **Make time to read every day.** Reading can fit into lots of routines – before naptime, on a bus, after snack time or a meal, etc. And you can schedule regular visits to your library.
- ✓ **Create space that encourages reading.** Have books in places that children can reach. Make a soft, cozy, quiet corner with pillows or a special chair that is reserved especially for reading.
- ✓ **Let children help choose the book** that you read together.

Involve Children...

- ✓ **Sit close together** and hold the book so children can see it.
- ✓ **Take time to look at the pictures** and talk about them. Ask children what they think is happening, or what the characters are feeling.
- ✓ **Make the story come to life** by reading with expression. Change your voice to become different characters or to fit different situations (deep/low, quiet/soft). Ask children to make special sounds with you: growling animal, howling wind, etc.
- ✓ **Stop at interesting points in the story** and ask questions. "What do you think will happen next?" "What would you do if you were there?" Help children relate the story to their own experiences. "Have you ever felt that way?" Listening to what children have to say lets them know that their thoughts are important to you.
- ✓ **Have fun with books.** Play word games, sing songs and make up rhymes with your children. Read books that offer funny situations and characters, so you can enjoy them and laugh together.
- ✓ **Read the same book over and over again.** Children love the repetition and being comfortable with a book gives them confidence.

Selecting Books...

- ✓ **Visit the library with your children.** This can be a familiar and special trip. Get library cards in the children's names. This will build their self-esteem and give them a sense of involvement.
- ✓ **Help children pick and checkout** library books that they would like. Ask the librarian for assistance in finding age-appropriate books.
- ✓ **If families and children speak two languages,** have books in both languages.
- ✓ **Select and read a variety of books** to children, including poetry and stories about other cultures, life-styles and countries. Children will discover the world through books.
- ✓ **Books can help you to discuss** important events in children's lives – a new baby in the family, starting child care, moving to a new home or a neighborhood. Books can also help children to understand their feelings – being angry at a friend, brother or sister, or feeling afraid to go to the doctor.
- ✓ **Continue to read to children after** they have learned to read. This will expose them to language, ideas and adventures beyond their own reading skills.

Other Things You Can Do...

- ✓ **Create a "book-nook" in your home** – a quiet, comfortable place away from noise – where children can keep their own books and stories. Put in a bookshelf, or perhaps a cardboard carton, and suggest decorating the area with your children's pictures and drawings.
- ✓ **Books make wonderful traveling** companions. Take them along on special trips, on occasions when you know you'll have to wait together, or in the car or bus.
- ✓ **Books make wonderful presents.** When children give or receive a book, it tells them that books are special.
- ✓ **Have children make their own books,** using photographs or their own drawings. Let children make up a story and have older children write it down for them. Read it back to them, pointing out the words.
- ✓ **Children learn through imitation.** Share your own reading time with children?with each of you reading your own book or magazine.
- ✓ **Have children look** for the first letter of their name in storybooks, on boxes and cans of food or other items in the home.
- ✓ **Let children see you read and point out** how reading helps you do important things like reading a recipe or electric bill and looking up a phone number.

To learn more, watch *A Place of Our Own* on your local public television stations and visit the website at www.aplaceofourown.org.



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