

# THE IMPORTANCE OF READING TO YOUR CHILDREN

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**Sharing books with your child is a fantastic way to build their language skills, introduce literacy skills, and build their knowledge of the world. Reading together is also great family bonding time.**

Try to read with your child every day, whether it be before school, after school or before bedtime.

It's important that this time is not made to be a chore, rather a time that both yourself and your child look forward to. Book sharing is all about engaging and involving your child in the book reading process and allowing them to play an active role throughout in an enriching and safe environment.



A great deal of research has been done on the benefits of sharing books with children, and it's no surprise that by reading regularly to your child, you are actually:

- Boosting their vocabulary and overall development of nouns, verbs and adjectives.
- Developing their knowledge of concepts relating to location, position, number, quantity, sequence, attributes, dimension, size and similarities and differences.
- Providing them with opportunities to support their inferential questioning skills.
- Sparking their imagination.
- Giving them an opportunity to explore their emotions and what different emotions may mean in different contexts.
- Improving their picture recognition and visual attention.

Here are a few key points on how to make the most of that special reading time together:

#### **Read with excitement in your voice.**

Use interesting voices and alter your expression whilst reading. Don't forget to make animal sounds such as, 'moo', 'quack' and 'woof', to engage your child and attain their interest. Better still, encourage your child to copy these sounds and add in others where they see fit. When you enjoy sharing books together, your child will enjoy this time too. They will also get the message that reading is important.

#### **Have a conversation while reading.**

Talk about the pictures together and ask your child open-ended questions. "What do you think will happen next?" "Why did that happen?" Relate what you are reading about to your child's own experiences. "Look, that pig's house is made of straw, but ours is made of bricks, isn't it?" You can extend them further by asking, "Which house do you think would be stronger?" By asking a range of questions, your child's reading comprehension skills will also bloom.

#### **Read it again!**

Reading favourite books over and over is important and helps your child get ready to read. Pause and give your child the chance to 'fill in the blanks' when they know the story or line. "Little pig, little pig, let me..." When children anticipate what's coming next, they have a sense of mastery over books. It's also a great way to practice specific concepts your child may have difficulty with in a safe environment.

If you're reading an old favourite, try different ways of sharing the story; close the book and 'remember' the story together, draw the best part of the story with some chalk on the cement and talk about why you love it, or act out the story using simple props, such as puppets or toy animals. Get creative, let their imagination run wild!

#### **Talk about interesting words.**

As you read through the story, stop every now and then to talk about an interesting word. Act it out, describe it another way, or relate it to something your child already knows. Give your child the opportunity to practice saying the word with you. "Is it a long word or a short word?" Clap out the syllables together. Try to use those interesting words again later in the day or in the coming week. This will help to consolidate their learning of new words or concepts. It can also help to build their understanding of words and their meanings in various contexts.

#### **Talk about the print.**

Don't forget to talk about print concepts with your child. Show them the front cover and the back cover. Show them how to hold the book and explain that we read left to right. Point out the author's name and distinguish the difference between an author and an illustrator. Point to individual words and letters to show them they are different and show them that several words together make a sentence. Give your child the job of 'turning the page' and don't be afraid to repeat this phrase each time they turn the page.

#### **Read words everywhere.**

Read words on street signs, in the shops or on the side of a bus. Organise a pen pal or leave little notes for your children at home. Reading words from all your surroundings demonstrates to your child that words are important and fun to read. It also shows that words are everywhere!

#### **Make reading fun!**

- Use props and puppets to act out parts of the book. E.g. use plastic food when reading *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*.
- Let your child lift the flaps and turn the pages to help maintain their attention and engagement throughout the story.
- Talk about the pictures in the story, make up parts or change the ending. Let your child's imagination go wild! You'll be surprised with their responses.
- Be animated! Use 'silly' voices to distinguish between the different story characters. Alter your facial expression and body language to make the story more engaging.
- Find a comfortable place to sit. E.g. Make a fort using the couch or cushions and a sheet. It's not only fun to make it with your child, but also is a great learning opportunity to talk about how we build a fort.

It's never too early or too late to start sharing books with your child. If you haven't already, make a time to go and check out the library together. Whilst there, why not join and pick out some books together? This can be such a fun experience for your child.

Your local library can provide you with instant access to a huge range of books and toys for you and your child's enjoyment. Library staff have a keen interest in helping families develop an interest in reading. And best of all, it's free.

