

Especially for parents of preschoolers! 

Read With Me

Reading and Storytelling

When a child asks to be read to, a parent has the perfect chance for shared reading with the child. This handout includes ideas you can use to read with your preschool child.

What is the practice?

During shared reading, try to get your child to ask questions. Together you can talk about the pictures or about what's going to happen next. Ask your child to tell about a time he had something happen like the story's characters did. You might want to stress certain words in the book. You could even use real objects for the words in the story. Shared reading helps children learn new words. They become aware of story structure, speech patterns, and learn about the reading process.



What does the practice look like?

A child sits with his parent while the adult reads a book. The child makes a comment about the story and the parent answers the child's comment in a positive way. The adult continues with the story, sometimes pausing to ask a question. For example, "What do you think he should do now?") or to point out something in the picture ("The girl looks really excited!"). When the child responds to the parent's question or comment, the parent answers with another question or comment. Back-and-forth talking between the child and parent keeps the child interested in the story.

How do you do the practice?

To engage a preschool child in story reading, you can do the following:

- Choose stories with topics and characters that are interesting to your child.
- Read at times when you are not hurried. You want to have plenty of time for your child to think about and answer your questions, and to ask questions of his own.
- Pause often to ask open-ended questions, making sure your child is following and understanding the story. For example, ask, "What do you think that word means?" Or ask, "How do you think Papa Bear knew someone had been sitting in his chair?"
- Expand on the child's answers, making it part of a conversation. Remember, there's no "right answer."
- Suggest different possibilities. Ask questions that start with "What if" or "Suppose" to see where the child will take the conversation.
- Pose more and more challenging questions.
- If a child uses pictures or a communication device, use messages that let him talk about the story. For example, program a device with words such as *turn page, more, read, stop, yes, and no*. Add other common phrases that can help discuss the story.

How do you know the practice worked?

- Is the child staying interested in the story until the end?
- Does the child ask questions, make comments about the story, and answer questions posed to him?
- Does the child demonstrate a larger vocabulary or better conversation skills?

Take a look at more reading together

What Might Happen Next?

Four-year-old Eduardo chooses a picture book for his mom to read to him before bed. "What book is this?" asks Eduardo's mom, showing him the front of the book. "pokey puppy," says Eduardo happily. "Yes, it's *The Pokey Little Puppy* (Janette Sebring Lowrey)," says his mother. She opens the book to the first page and points at the picture. "What are these puppies doing?" she asks. "They're playing," says Eduardo. "That's right. They are playing together." She reads a couple of pages. Then before turning to the next page she asks, "What do you think is going to happen next?" Eduardo sits up excitedly and says, "Oh! They'll roll way down the hill!" He makes a tumbling motion with his arms. "Let's see," says his mother. "Turn the page for me." Eduardo turns the page and his mother exclaims, "Look! You're right!" Then she asks him, "Why do you think they did that?" "To go home," answers Eduardo. "You think they want to go home?" asks his mother. "Yeah, they're tired," says Eduardo. "You might be right. Let's see," replies his mother as she continues reading the book.



Magazines Too!

Three-year old Benton looks intently at a garden magazine he has found on the coffee table. His father notices that Benton is interested in photos of birdhouses. He motions for Benton to sit next to him on the couch and tell him about the birdhouses. Benton climbs up beside Dad and points to one he likes. His dad asks him why he likes that birdhouse. "I like blue," says Benton. "If you made a birdhouse, what would it look like?" asks his dad. "Big and blue and have lots of holes for birds!" answers Benton excitedly. "Tell me about these birdhouses" says his father, pointing at the pictures. Benton looks at the pictures in the magazine and "reads" about the birdhouses. He and his father talk about the birds in the pictures. Benton points to ones that he has seen in their yard.

The Right Touch for Reading

Five-year-old Tim has a visual impairment. He sits with his grandmother as she reads his favorite story about animals, using a book with textured pages. As Granny reads, she lets Tim feel each animal on a page. Tim's grandmother reads the first part of a sentence, then pauses to let Tim say the rest. Tim smiles as he helps Granny "read" the book by saying the words that he knows come next. When they get to a part about cats, Granny reminds Tim about petting the neighbor's cat that morning. "How did Tiger feel?" asks Granny. "He was soft and fuzzy," says Tim. "What other animals do you think would feel that way?" asks Granny. "Bunnies and hamsters," says Tim. "What animals do you think would feel different?" Tim thinks for a minute, then answers, "Fish and snakes." "I think you're right," says Granny, and she continues to the next page in the book.

