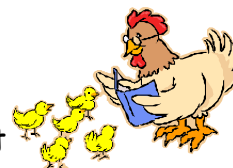


Show Your Love: Read Aloud



February 14 -- Valentine's Day -- is also "Read to Your Child Day" because parents and other family members can show their love for the children in their lives by reading books with them. On this day, instead of sharing candy, share books!

Reading aloud to children **helps them develop vocabulary and knowledge on a variety of topics, enhances their listening skills and attention span, fuels their imagination, and sharpens their observation skills.** Many books present problems and solutions within their storylines, which in turn helps children **develop problem solving skills.** Reading aloud to children will help them **develop a love of reading** that will assist them in future learning.



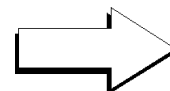
Even if your children have learned to read independently, make a point to read aloud to them anyway. They will enjoy the one-on-one time with you! They also will benefit from your reading aloud stories that are still too difficult for them to read independently; their ears are able to absorb more complex ideas, vocabulary, etc. while being read to by an adult.

The **National Network for Child Care** (www.nncc.org) provides the following guidance on how to choose appropriate books to read aloud:

CHOOSING BOOKS TO READ ALOUD

- ☐ Choose books that YOU will enjoy reading aloud. Your enthusiasm (or lack of it) will be contagious. Always read any book before sharing it as a read aloud.
- ☐ Select stories that have an interesting plot (story line), frequent dialogue, some suspense and/or adventure, suitable emotional content for the age and background of your children.
- ☐ Match the length of the story with the children's attention spans and listening skills. Begin with short selections. Increase story length gradually. Try using two or three short books in place of a longer story.
- ☐ Look for books that support and extend the children's special needs and interests. For example, Owen, by Kevin Henkes, deals with a child's need for a security blanket; Corduroy, by Don Freeman, is about the importance of finding a friend; and Rainbow Fish, by Marcus Pfister, demonstrates the rewards of sharing.
- ☐ Read as many children's books as you can. Refer to book lists for suggestions. When you find an author and/or illustrator you like, look for more of their books. Your list of favorites will grow quickly.
- ☐ Look for books that represent a variety of cultures, both in content and illustration. Examples include: Abuella (Spanish); Amazing Grace (Black American); First Strawberries (Native American); My Best Shoes (multicultural) and People (multicultural).
- ☐ A book is "new" if the child has not heard it. Therefore, the book's age (copyright date) is not necessarily important. To restate an old song, "Read new books, enjoy the old. One is silver, the other gold."
- ☐ Expect your children to have favorite books. Honor their requests to read them over and over again, yet keep introducing new selections as well.
- ☐ If the book you have chosen to read aloud is not working, stop the reading with a simple statement such as, "I see this is not the right book for us today." Move on to another book or activity. We all make mistakes. Better to acknowledge it rather than spoil the read aloud experience.

TURN THE PAGE FOR THE NATIONAL NETWORK FOR CHILD CARE'S "GUIDELINES FOR READING ALOUD."



Parts of this tip sheet were reprinted, with permission, from the National Network for Child Care - NNCC. (1994). Reading aloud. In "Better Kid Care: A video learn-at-home unit" (pp. 1-13). University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Cooperative Extension.

GUIDELINES FOR READING ALOUD



The National Network for Child Care (www.nncc.org/Literacy/better.read.aloud.html) provides the following guidelines for adults when reading aloud to children:

- Allow time for the children to gather and settle in. Make sure each child is comfortable and ready to pay attention. A gentle reminder such as, "It is time to put on your listening ears," will help. (Note: avoid taking away reading time as discipline for children who misbehave. Do not associate reading with negative consequences.)
- Make yourself comfortable. Whatever your seating arrangement, a low chair, the floor, snuggled on the couch, or in a large chair, be sure that each child can see the book.
- When everyone is ready, introduce the book. Include three things:
 - 1) A short sentence or two that relates the book to your children.
 - 2) The title of the book.
 - 3) The author and/or illustrator of the book.

For example: "I know that you like to pet our big black kitty named Mittens. Today our story is about a very special orange kitty in the book called Annie and the Wild Animals. Jan Brett is the author who wrote the story. She also illustrated the book with beautiful pictures."

- Point to the title as you say it, as well as the name(s) of the author and/or illustrator. Use the words 'Author' and 'Illustrator.' Explain that the author writes the story and the illustrator draws the pictures. Sometimes the same person does both. Gradually children will begin to ask for their favorites.



- Move the book around, either as you read or at the end of the page, so that each child can see the illustrations. This is very important because the children are "reading" the pictures as you read the words. In picture storybooks, the illustrations show a lot of the story action. Try not to block the illustrations with your arm as you turn the pages.
- Read with expression. Change the pitch (high-low), tone (gentle-rough), and volume (soft-loud) of your voice to show different characters or create a mood.
- Pace your reading to fit the story. Let your voice reflect anticipation. A short pause can create suspense. Do not read too quickly. The children need enough time to look at the pictures and think about what they are hearing.
- Get involved. Let your facial expressions show the story content by smiling, frowning, showing surprise, anger, etc.
- Point to characters or objects in the pictures as you read about them. Show motion, as when Peter slides down the hill in The Snowy Day by Ezra Jack Keats. Drop blueberries into a small metal pail to echo the sound, "Kuplink, Kuplank, Kuplunk," in Blueberries for Sal by Robert McCloskey. Mimic Max's magic trick of "staring into all their yellow eyes without blinking," in Where the Wild Things Are by Maurice Sendak. Don't take away from the story with too many extra motions. Use only those which seem natural and comfortable for you.
- Ask the children to take part in any story that has a repetitive phrase. For example, they will enjoy repeating, "Hundreds of cats, Thousands of cats, Millions and billions and trillions of cats," in Millions of Cats by Wanda Gag or, "Terrible, horrible, no good, very bad day" in Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day by Judith Viorst.
- When you have finished reading, close the book and say, "And that's the story of Annie and the Wild Animals. Wait a few moments. This gives the children time to ask questions or make comments. Do not ask, "Did you like the story?" or "Wasn't that a good story?" They will want to please you with a "yes" answer and may not give their true ideas.
- If a child says they have already heard the story you are about to read, say, "Oh! I'm so glad" or "Isn't that wonderful. You will need to listen very carefully and see if it's exactly the same story you already know. I'll check with you when we're finished." Be sure to follow through. The child will probably remind you.
- Remember: reading aloud does not come naturally to everyone. Doing it successfully comes with practice.☆