

Parent Pages

Reading Aloud is Time Well Spent

Reading aloud to children is the single most important factor in developing reading readiness skills and a love of reading. Researchers recommend starting at birth and continuing through the elementary years. The more often you read to your child, the more likely he or she will develop into a proficient and prolific reader. The payoff is substantial:

Children who are read to have greater vocabularies. The average picture book contains diverse vocabulary not typically used in daily conversation. Children's picture books contain three times the number of rarer words than found in conversation or speech heard on television.

Children who are read to are comfortable around books. A child that understands how books work (print runs left to right and top to bottom) and that printed words have meaning will have an easier time in the process of learning to read.

Children who are read to understand how our language works. Phonemic awareness is the ability to hear and manipulate the smaller sounds in spoken words. This ability will make it easier for children when they start breaking up the written word when learning how to read. Rhyming and poetry books emphasize these smaller sounds in our language.

Children who are read to learn their ABCs. By using high-quality alphabet books, children can begin to learn their alphabet and understand what those letters look like and the specific sounds associated with each letter.

Children who are read to love books! By holding and hugging your child while reading and talking about books, you create a treasury of warm and wonderful feelings that nurture a love of reading.

Children who are read to are exposed to the diversity in the world around them. Through books your child can experience a wide range of families, cultures, foods, ethnicities, and places that they may not encounter in their day-to-day explorations.

Children who are read to explore difficult topics with loving caregivers. Learning to use the potty, becoming a new brother or sister, watching a beloved pet die, or learning how to react in an emergency – all these situations can be safely explored through books.

Children who are read to have great imaginations! Children base their creative play on real-life experiences as well as on story book plots. The more children are read to, the greater pool of ideas they have to draw from.

Tips for Reading Aloud

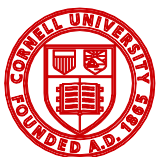
Anyone can read books aloud to children. Even if you are not a strong reader, you can develop a love of books in your child. Use the following tips and techniques to positively impact your child's literacy skills in just a few minutes every day. The benefits will last a lifetime!

- Find a comfortable place to sit and turn off other distractions – television, radio, and phone. Devote this time to reading to your child.
- Hold the book so that your child can see the pages clearly. Let independent children hold the book themselves.
- Involve your child in the telling of the story. Ask questions that require your child to respond with more than yes or no answers. Have him or her label images seen in the pictures and predict what will happen in the story. If you are reading a favorite book, encourage your child to “read” it to you. Sit back and delight in your child's amazing

memory; children who pretend to read are on the path to becoming independent readers!

- Read with expression and vary the pace of your reading. Everyone gets bored with monotone!
- Don't become discouraged if your child doesn't sit still for the entire book. Find books that can be acted out: *Toddlerobics* by Zita Newcome, *Clap Your Hands* by Lorinda Bryan Cauley, *From Head to Toe* by Eric Carle and *Calling All Toddlers* by Francesca Simon are all great read alouds!
- Visit the library and let your child pick out his or her own books. Don't forget to ask the librarian for book suggestions – they love books and can recommend many great books for every reader!
- Reread your child's favorite books when asked. Reread *your* favorite books often – children will pick up on your enthusiasm for books. Beware when reading older “classics” from your childhood – some may contain gender and racial stereotypes.
- Create reading rituals (before bed or before leaving for school) but also squeeze in reading anytime you have a few minutes. Leave books in your car, in the diaper bag, outside, in the bathtub . . .

The first years last forever. Researchers have confirmed what parents instinctively know: the experiences children have in the first three years of life have a profound impact on how the brain develops. A child's ability to learn – and to become a successful reader – is largely based on these early experiences. A stimulating environment that includes storybook reading, dialogue and language games lays a solid foundation for a lifetime of reading success.



Cornell University
Cooperative Extension

Prepared by Wendy Wilcox, Extension Support Specialist in the Department of Policy Analysis & Management at Cornell University. Visit the Parenting in Context website at <https://www.human.cornell.edu/pam/engagement/parenting/>.

©2005 Cornell Cooperative Extension