

WHY SHOULD I READ TO MY CHILD?

Reading together with your child is cozy. When you share a book, you enjoy being close. It is a time to give each other your undivided attention. The time you spend together in this way makes your child feel special and loved.

Reading helps children learn about language. They learn new words and what they mean. Children hear words in books that they don't hear in conversation. The colorful pictures in children's books give meaning to the words. If your child has never heard the word "enormous," he or she will never say the word "enormous." And if you've never heard or said the word, reading and writing it will be very difficult.

Reading to children helps prepare them for school success. Hearing books read aloud helps children learn to listen! This gives them the background they need to increase their attention span.

"According to a report issued by the Center for the Study of Reading, at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, reading aloud to children is the single most important activity contributing to their eventual success in reading."

~ Jim Trelease,

The Read Aloud Handbook

Reading about the unfamiliar can make it less threatening. Books can expand your child's understanding of the whole world! Books can prepare a child for her first visit to the dentist, or her first day of school.

Books can make parenting easier. Once your child has learned to enjoy reading, books provide a fun activity. When you have to wait to see the doctor or sit still in the car, reading together will make time pass quickly. Instead of becoming impatient, your child can be happy while waiting.



Photo by Howard G. Buffett

HOW DO I READ ALOUD TO MY CHILD?

Choose a time when your child is alert and happy. Make sure you turn off the TV and radio or stereo. Focus all your attention on your child. Hold him on your lap or sit close to him.

Choose a book that you know will interest him. Start with something short. Talk about the cover, and let him look at the pictures.

Ask questions that will make him curious about the story. "Why is the boy sad?" or "Where is the dog hiding?" Asking questions will make him ready to listen.

When you read to your child, do it with enthusiasm! Use different voices for different characters. Read slowly to enjoy every word. Then read fast in the exciting parts! Make your voice sometimes soft and sometimes loud to add to the meaning.

Ask questions about the story as you go along. Your child will get more out of the book if you talk about it together.

Watch your child's reaction. Answer her questions as you read. Talk about the pictures or the story.

Be patient if she loses interest. You don't have to finish the whole book. You can put it aside to finish later. Never force a bored child to sit still and listen. Keep offering books in a positive way. She will learn that reading means special times with you.