

Read-Aloud Tips

Do Your Homework.

Always read the book ahead of time so you can spot learning opportunities - key words or phrases, rare words, passages to vary your tone and pace, and ways to connect the story with your child's life. Your enthusiasm will be contagious so make sure the book is one *you* like.

Introduction, Please.

Give the title, the author and the illustrator their due. Even better - do a little research on the author to further supplement any information on the dust jacket. Who knew that Robert McCloskey, author of *Make Way for Ducklings*, actually took ducks to his apartment and gave them wine to drink so they would hold still while he drew them?

Slow Down!

Give your child the chance to build that mental picture and think about what has happened and what will happen next. Children also need time to look at the illustrations and connect them with the words they hear. In addition, hearing appropriate rhythm and flow model what a good reader sounds like.

Discussion is Good.

Thoughts, opinions, discoveries - even hopes and fears - are going to surface after reading a story. Let them surface! And, by all means, discuss them! No need for the discussion to be anything but a discussion. No right or wrong answers - just a good, old-fashioned talking about what, who, when, where, and why.

Highlight Rare Words.

Envious, begrudging, discontented and jaundiced...you'll find all four of these words in one sentence in the book *Chrysanthemum* by Kevin Henkes. Words that are not normally used in every day conversation are *rare* words. The best place to find them? Picture books and newspapers. Children with a larger vocabulary understand more of what you (and/or the teacher) say.

Ask Open-Ended Questions.

If you don't, you miss out on taking the story beyond the book. Thinking skills, including observing, comparing, organizing, summarizing and evaluating, develop when you pose questions that require more than yes or no for an answer. Focus on questions that build background knowledge or relate to real-life experiences.

Make "I Wonder" Statements.

"I wonder why Ferdinand didn't want to run and butt heads with all the other little bulls?" "I wonder if Max was sorry that he talked back to his Mom?" Making an "I wonder" statement is another way to get some discussion. It's safe and allows everyone to express their ideas and opinions.

What Will Happen Next?

If the first Billy Goat Gruff goes trip trap over the bridge, does that mean the second and third Billy Goats Gruff will do it, too? Children love being asked to guess what they think will happen next in a story. Being able to recognize that there is a structure or repeated pattern to the story helps children make a prediction. The confidence gained from recognizing key words, catchphrases, familiar patterns or certain story structures builds thinking skills and leads to an intrinsic motivation to explore books.

Read It Again! And Again. And Again.

There is a reason that your child wants you to read *Goodnight Moon* over and over. It's kind of like a favorite song. You know it by heart, and no matter how many times you hear it, you still love it. Read it once and you'll remember some of the things in the great green room. Read it again and you'll remember a few more. Read it yet again and you'll realize that mouse is only on the pages that are in color. The repetition leads to more letter and word concepts, more interpretations, more elaborate discussion, and, eventually - independent reading.

Challenge Their Mind.

"According to experts, reading and listening skills begin to converge at about eighth grade. Until then, children usually listen on a higher level than that on which they read. Therefore, children can hear and understand stories that are more complicated and interesting than anything they could read on their own - which has to be one of God's greatest blessings for first-graders. The last thing you want first-graders thinking is that what they're reading in first grade is as good as books are going to get!" Go ahead and read *Charlotte's Web* or *The Mouse and the Motorcycle* to your four-year-old - they can handle it.

•*The Read-Aloud Handbook* by Jim Trelease

Read Every Day.

If you've got time to watch TV and talk on the phone (and you know you watch TV and talk on the phone), then you've got time to read to your child(ren). Whether after dinner or before bed - establish a daily reading schedule and watch it turn into a habit - for the whole family! Just 20 minutes a day is all it takes to positively impact reading ability. It all starts at home...