

Discover the magic of reading aloud

For parents of students in primary and junior grades

Reading is love

You are your child's first and most influential teacher. The parent-child relationship that begins with reading aloud can develop into a lifetime of learning together. Here are some practical tips for making it happen.

Find a consistent time, or two

Sometimes it takes a little juggling to find the ideal time to take that reading break with your child. Quality reading requires concentration so think about moving the reading routine to earlier in the evening. The main point is to have a routine that adult and child look forward to. Two shorter reading times could also work.

Choose the right books together

Parents need to consider their child's interests, but they also have a role to play in choosing books. Choose books for a reason:

- Non-fiction texts build vocabulary and world knowledge
- Rhymes and poems encourage play with language
- Books with predictable patterns give young children the support they need in order to read independently
- Reading to the child just above his reading ability level helps develop reading vocabulary
- Re-reading of familiar books builds confidence
- New versions of old favourites keep the plot lines and characters fresh and interesting

Talk about the book

Use these questions and sentence starters to encourage your child to clarify and extend his or her thinking. Be a model student and show your child how to learn along with you.

What's too hard to read aloud? Any reading material that is beyond your child's emotional or social maturity level is too hard.

Learn tricks that add drama

- Believe it or not, reading slowly can be better. Children's authors read their own work slowly and with lots of expression. Check out individual author's websites to hear this for yourself!
- Long descriptions are hard to read aloud. If you own the book, pencil out or bracket these parts and skip them.
- Use toys, food or pictures as props to help read, tell or retell the story.
- Prepare for a second reading with sticky notes beside your favourite parts.
- Sometimes give the fidgety child some paper to draw pictures about the story as you read it.
- You can 'write' yourself and your child into new versions of favourite tales and enjoy performing these together.
- Think big! Take your children beyond the words on the page into the author's world.

Plan for a lifetime of learning

Young children learning to read on their own need lots of encouragement and benefit from repeated practice with easy books. As children mature, so can the book talks between parent and child. Reading together gives the parent and the older child a shared experience, and talking about the ideas in the book develops the mind. What began as simple language play with babies evolves into a learning connection with adolescents. Great minds don't just happen; they are carefully nurtured within close relationships.

Read on to learn some coaching language that encourages thinking at any age.

Words that help the parent and child share the learning:

- That's exactly what I was thinking.
- Oh, now I see what you mean.
- I never knew that ...
- I'm not sure. What do you think?

- You're right! How did you figure that out?

Words that help make predictions:

- Let's look at the pictures. I wonder ...
- I wonder what would happen if ...
- What questions do we have right now?

Words that support comprehension:

- Let's make a list of ...
- I think that part might be important so I'm going to read it again.
- Let's retell the story from the pictures.
- Maybe we can find some clues.
- Well, we now know ...
- Let's look at the picture again (read that part again) while we think about your idea.
- Could you tell me more about that?
- What do you mean?
- Does that make sense?
- Is there a part you don't understand?
- Are there some words you don't understand?

Words that lead to critical thinking and summarizing:

- Do you think that could really have happened?
- Who do you think would like this book? Why?
- Let's think about the moral of the story.
- I think the author wants us to learn ... from this story. Let's look for proof.

Words for making connections:

- Does that remind you of anything? Anyone?
- That character reminds me of you. Remember when you ...
- I wonder if we could find some other books about ...
- That reminds me of the time we ...

Words for having fun:

- I love the sound of those words. I'm going to read them again.
- Let's clap out the words.
- Let's walk out the poem.

- Let's make up a finger play.

Parent resources for reading aloud

- Public Library - Family Storytime
- Early Years Centre

