

Making the Most of Reading to Your Child

Communication while reading to your child –
The most important thing you can do is talk to him or her.
Talk. Ask questions.
Comment about what you are reading.

Talking to your child about books you are reading helps language development:

- Attending to stories and books helps to develop important learning skills such as attention span, memory, and listening.
- Stories and books help children learn concepts of literacy, including beginning, middle, end of stories and concepts such as story characters and events.
- Stories and picture books help children learn new vocabulary words.

Some things you can do:

- ***Label*** the items on the pages of picture books.
 - Relate the pictures to real-life objects and events.
 - Discuss how the pictures help tell the story.
- Children learn more when you talk about the story while reading.
 - You can ***explain new words*** and talk about the reason something happened.
 - Talking about the book you are reading will help your child ***make connections*** between the new things they are learning and the things they already know.
- Explain the differences in books or parts of stories that are ***“real”*** and those that are ***“pretend”***.
- ***Point to the text*** as you read.
 - This will help your child understand that the text on the page represents words and pictures.
- If your child has trouble attending to a story, try to make it easier to attend by:
 - reading it in shorter parts,
 - choosing a shorter book,
 - choosing books that are interesting and exciting to your child,
 - trying picture books with simple drawings and photos and helping your child enjoy books by talking about the pictures.

Make Language Fun

Make a Book

Take some photos and make a book about your child's interests, your family, or a place you've been or are going.

Books can be made by putting pictures on pages of paper or by saving them in your tablet to make a story.

Help your child draw pictures on pages and put them together to tell a story. Let your child help dictate the story.

Go to the Library

Public libraries often have good selections of a variety of children's books.

Many libraries have summer reading times for young children. With an ID, you should be able to get a library card (they are free).

[Links to Florida Public Libraries](#)

Reading to your child is Important for Language Development

A Key Factor: Gain interest in order to develop skills in listening, engaging, and responding.

Books – Use high-interest books and consider your child’s interests and abilities to attend and listen when choosing books. Some suggestions for book choices are below:

- **Choose books with recognizable drawings and photos.**
- **Read repetitive books.** Leave some final words out and give children a chance to fill in the word.
- **Read books with flaps.** Before having your child lift the flap, ask questions such as “what will happen?” and “who’s hiding here?”
- **Read I Spy books.** Enjoy spying for the target object with your child. You can make the spying game easier or shorter if needed. Comment and ask questions about the objects you are finding.
- **Read the same book over and over.** Children enjoy hearing their favorite stories again and they enjoy memorizing them.
- **Choose books that are from familiar rhymes and songs.** Use familiar motions that go with the songs and rhymes (example: Itsy, Bitsy Spider).
- **Choose some non-fiction books about topics your child likes (cars, dolls, bugs, cooking)**

If your child doesn’t know a lot of words yet or has difficulty following a lengthy story, remember, you don’t have to read every word on every page. You can tell the story in simpler terms or read only part of the page. The important thing is to talk about the book you are reading.

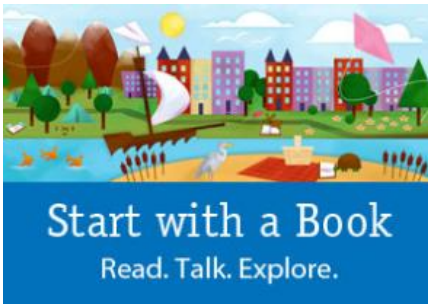
Your child might be showing an interest in alphabet and counting books. These types of books are often rhythmic and engaging.

Although counting and ABC books are sometimes easily memorized by children, the important aspect is your conversation with your child while you are reading the books.

Emphasize the fun of language and communication.

Tips for Reading to Your Child from Florida Division of Early Learning

1. Have ongoing and engaging conversations with your child.
2. Create literacy-friendly environments. Make sure you have books, magazines and other reading materials in your home that are appropriate for the age of your child.
3. Make reading enjoyable. Read with your child in a comfortable place.
4. Make reading to your child a part of your daily routine.



Encouraging Skills for Future Readers

You are your child's first and best teacher and by establishing routines for reading regularly you are teaching your child that reading is fun and important. By talking about books and pointing out a few concepts for your child to notice, you are adding to their beginning skills in literacy.

Vocabulary – This skill means your child understands word meanings and learns new words.

When you read unfamiliar words or words your child doesn't know or remember yet, give the meaning of the word.

Sometimes a definition might be complicated and in that case, give examples of what the word means. Have fun with the word by using it in your conversations the next few days.

Story comprehension – This means your child is able to understand what is happening in a story. Comprehension includes identification of characters and setting.

Encourage comprehension by talking about the story. Build anticipation about what will happen. Discuss the characters and describe them and their actions as you read.

Language concepts – Language concepts are ideas that relate to words such as "first" and "last".

Understanding language concepts means your child might be able to start making predictions and might understand things about the story that are not directly stated.

As you read, describe pictures and **discuss** characteristics such as big, little, funny, silly, sad.

Awareness of Print

Point to words as you read.

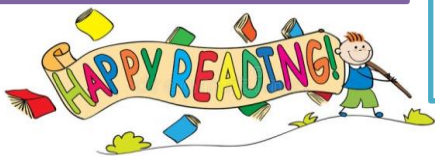
Call attention to words:

- Road signs
- Restaurant names
- Cereal boxes
- Store names

Phonics and Letter Sounds – This means your child can imitate you when you make sounds. He or she might be able to say the sound that matches a letter you name or give the letter when you make the sound (example: "b says buh" or "what letter has the 'buh' sound?")

Read rhyming books and books with clever and interesting sounds. Dr. Seuss books are good examples of uses of rhymes and interesting words.

Add sounds when you are reading and encourage your child to make sounds that go with the stories. For example, add animal sounds when you are reading about a farm.



Pleasure and enjoyment of reading – This means just what it says – your child enjoys books and stories.

Teach this by showing and expressing that you enjoy books too.

Read with enthusiasm and even though you emphasize and expose your child to the skills listed above, do not over-do to the point that the fun of the story, pictures, and time spent with you get lost in "lessons".

Remember, your most important role is to share the enjoyment of reading. Your child will be taught these skills when he or she starts school. Your role as your child's "reading partner" is to encourage his or her participation, interest, and awareness of literacy.

Important: make it fun!



Notes about Video Games and Reading

(Source: The Effects of video games on school achievement and reading by Gwen Dewar, PhD. for Parenting Science, 2018.)

Reviews of research indicate that game apps and websites related to reading skills and story comprehension can have a positive impact on the following:

- Ability to follow a plot or story
- Listening for sounds and important details
- Identifying characters and places in stories

These effects were noted to be **positive when**

- Videos and games were used in moderation for just a few hours a week
- The games and stories were appropriate for the child's age

Important: Watching a video story or using an app of an interactive story can be interesting and engaging for your child. Time spent on the computer or device does not take the place of reading with you or another family member. Even though some skills might be gained, the experience does not replace the person-to-person interaction and enjoyment of reading gained when you read with your child.

When you are considering an app or website to increase your child's exposure to reading concepts, it's important to remember a few strategies:

- ✓ Limit the time and tell your child in advance that there is a time limit.
 - Suggestion: use a timer or clock to show your child the time limit
- ✓ Choose wisely:
 - Age-appropriate
 - Focused on skills
 - Not too hard for your child to enjoy
- ✓ Interact with your child. Ask questions about the video

References and Resources

[Family Involvement Section of TATS Website](#) – Includes “TATS Talks” about topics such as child development, exceptional student services, importance of pre-k, and tips for family engagement.

[Ready to Read](#) - FL Division of Early Learning - ideas and resources for encouraging reading at home

[Just Read, Families](#) Florida Department of Education's literacy links for tips for parents, reading to children of specific age ranges, and summer reading activities.

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