



Read-alouds

Foundations of Reading

To learn to read well, children need to know how to recognize and pronounce words (**decoding**), what words mean (**vocabulary**) and how to understand the meaning of a group of words or connected text (**comprehension**). To build these foundations of reading, teachers use a balanced approach and focus on the goal of reading for meaning. Parents play a vital role in supporting this work at home.

Why read aloud to your child?

Reading aloud is important because it:

- exposes younger children to the more formal and descriptive language of books;
- helps all children develop and improve literacy skills—reading, writing, speaking and listening;
- encourages children to use their imagination as they visualize people, places, times and events outside of their daily experience;
- develops vocabulary and background knowledge and expands children’s understanding of the world and their place in it;
- supports the development of thinking skills as children ask questions and talk about what is being read;
- models fluent reading for children;
- presents an opportunity for children to see books as a source of a pleasant, valuable and exciting experience; and
- motivates children to want to read on their own.

Read-aloud Tips for Young Children

- Begin reading aloud to children early.
- With very young children, “read” family photo albums together.
- Use simple, bold, colourful picture books.
- Begin with picture books, then move to story books and novels.
- Only read for as long as your child can pay attention. Gradually increase the time.
- Use the illustrations to encourage prediction and interpretation.
- Read and reread the same books when your child asks you to do so. You might get tired of the same story, but your child doesn’t!
- Celebrate with your child if they memorize the books and can “read” them along with you.

Finding Books for Beginning Readers

- Choose books that can be read in one sitting (about 15 minutes).
- Read different kinds of books: poetry, fairy tales, real-world tales and informational stories.
- Read a book without words. Talk about the pictures.
- Choose books that relate to your child’s personal interests and build their knowledge.
- Look for books that are multicultural or feature human differences.

Read-aloud Tips for Older Children

- Choose a book slightly above your child's reading level that they'll enjoy. Select a book with a strong character, one that you might use different voices and actions for. Practice the book before sharing it.
- Before reading, look at the cover and title page with your child. Talk about the author and illustrator.
- Ask questions about the book topic, so your child can begin to predict what the story might be about.
- Read slowly to enable your child to follow what you are reading. Encourage questions and share thoughts about the story.
- After you finish reading, ask for your child's reactions. Share yours. You might ask your child to talk about their favourite parts or you might retell the story together.
- Occasionally, you might extend the story when your child's interest is high. You could orally create a sequel with your child or ask them to suggest an alternate ending. You might make stick puppets or drawings together to enhance the retelling of the story.

Read-aloud Tips for All Children

- Establish daily routine story times.
- When reading aloud, use expression, changing your tone of voice and adjusting pace, so that your child can build a mental picture.
- For a change of pace, offer your child audio books and listen to them together while in the car.
- Check the public library for books and audiobooks.
- Talk about what you are reading during and after a read-aloud session.
- Help your child relate books to their own experiences.
- If your child is active, allow them to draw as they listen.
- Encourage your child to choose books. Take turns choosing the book to read.
- Read just for enjoyment. Don't make reading into an exercise. Have fun reading with your child!

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Last updated: March 2020