



*Reading to, and with, your child is the most important thing you can do to help your child learn.*

### Why Reading is Important

- Reading is essential to **brain development** in young children. The human brain is the only organ which is not completely formed at birth with only some of its 100 billion neurons connected. Through the child's experiences, connections among the neurons form. These connections are reinforced by repeated stimulation to become permanent connections in the brain. A wonderful way to help stimulate your child's brain is to read to them daily, beginning at birth.
- **Language development** is crucial in the early years. Adult-child interactions are essential to language development. Research has shown that when parents frequently speak to their infants, their children will learn almost 300 more words by age two than did peers whose parents rarely spoke to them. Reading is an excellent way to prepare for success in school, help develop language skills and expand vocabularies.
- **Bonding** is key to the development of your child. Reading together is a wonderful warm way to bond. Cuddle, turn the pages, and talk about or tell a story from the pictures. Think of some of your, or their, favorite activities and the good feelings brought on recalling them. Create memories like these that include books.

### How to Read to Children

- **Take your time with the stories.** Appreciate child's interest and support their participation.
- **Talk about the pictures in the story.**
- **Ask child to predict what will come next.**
- **Let your child turn the pages.**
- **Talk about new or unfamiliar words.**
- **Take turns reading; let your child repeat familiar phrases.**
- **Read favorite books over and over and over and over . . .**

### How to Find Good Books

- **Ask your friends,** neighbors and teachers to share the names of some of the books they have enjoyed reading to children. Most people are more than happy to share a book which has really worked for them.
- **Get your child his/her own library card** and visit often. Ask your librarian for help selecting books.
- **Look for award winning books.** Each year the American Library Association selects children's books for the Caldecott Medal for illustration and the Newberry Medal for writing.
- **Let your children choose.** As soon as they're old enough, they can have their children join them in looking for books and making selections. This will show their children that they value their opinions as well as make the child more interested in reading something they helped to pick out.

### Where to Read

- **On your lap.** Give your child a sense of security by sitting on your lap. When you cuddle with your child while reading a story, your child begins to associate reading with a sense of security. Children learn better when they feel safe.
- **Create a special reading place.** Cozy pillows are a great start. Have him or her surround themselves with familiar things like favorite toys or blankets. **Provide lots of books** from the library, yard sales or thrift stores. Always have books available for your child.

- **Read Outside.** Make it part of a picnic. Read a book with an outdoor setting. Enjoy a book related to your activity (a ball game, trip to the beach, supermarket, or doctor visit.) Keep books in a bag ready for the daily car or bus ride. Read street signs, grocery labels, talk or read while waiting in line.
- **Bedtime.** To help troubleshoot the never-ending pleas for more stories, have a set number of books each night, with one saved for the last read before they go to sleep.

### Terrific Tips

- **Turn off the TV.** Positive interactions, such as reading, greatly enhance children’s development cognitively, physically, socially and emotionally. TV in moderation is said to be beneficial to those over the age of 2 (PBS, Nature shows), but too much can be detrimental: **research shows watching 4 hours a day are more likely to be overweight; more likely to view violence which can cause anxiety and more likely to view shows which reinforce gender roles as well as racial stereo-types.** Moderation is the key. If your child does watch TV, try to watch with him/her or talk about what the child saw on TV. Spend time interacting with children.
- Turn off the lights and **read by flashlight.** It makes for fun snuggling and lots of giggles.
- Find or make a silly, **outrageous hat** and you can call it your “reading hat”. When your child sees you put it on she will know it is time for reading!
- **Tell stories together.** If you find yourself away from home and without a book just simply narrate what your child did that day. With a few twists thrown in: “on the way to school a flying horse flew by our car.” You can even make up a monster which your child scares away and make them the hero. Children love being the hero.
- Use hand or finger **puppets** (socks or paper bags) or stuffed animals. Stories always will sound more interesting coming from a furry/made-up character.
- **Read with a pet or let your child read to a pet.** Children love to read to pets who will sit quietly with them. Dogs and stuffed animals are especially good. Because pets are none judgmental, the child doesn’t feel bad if they stumble or struggle to sound out words, or want to make up super-silly stories.
- What could be a better **gift** for a child than exposure to literacy? Give your child, and their friends, books for birthday/holiday gifts.
- **Cook together.** Ask your child to read the list of ingredients or directions. This will also improve math skills in areas of fractions and measurement.
- **Encourage your child to act out a story.** Your child and friends/ siblings/stuffed animals can act out favorite stories with the child as the director/narrator. You can get in on the act, too.
- **Model reading and writing yourself.** Children are more likely to enjoy reading and writing if they see parents enjoying it. You can read novels, nonfiction, magazines, and newspapers, compose in a journal or write letters. The important thing is for your child to see you reading and writing for pleasure.
- **Write messages to your child.** Children LOVE to read something just to them from a parent. It helps to strengthen the parent child bond. And encourage your child to write messages to you. If you can’t read what your child has written, ask them to read it to you.

**Daily reading can greatly enhance your child’s development  
Just a few moments a day can create memories which will last a lifetime.**

*Read To Succeed*, the community literacy collaborative in Rutherford County, will promote reading, with an emphasis on family literacy. This non-profit initiative supports literacy programs and fosters awareness of the importance of reading. [www.readtosucceed.org](http://www.readtosucceed.org)