

Book Reading to Promote Literacy

Many parents enjoy reading books with their children, and “storytime” can be an important part of a child’s daily routine. Reading together can be a pleasurable bonding experience for both parent and child. In addition to being fun, reading books is an excellent way to stimulate the development of language and pre-literacy skills. There is no “right” way to read a book with your child. The following are suggestions on how to make the experience both interesting and beneficial for your child:

- ❖ *Set the mood:* Make the experience as peaceful and comfortable as possible. Find a comfortable place such as a favorite chair. Your child will begin to regard reading as a pleasurable experience.
- ❖ *Let your child experience the book:* Before you start reading the book, let your child explore it – hold the book, touch the cover, flip through the pages, etc. You can then model the correct way to hold a book and turn the pages; this way your child will learn how to approach a book (e.g., how to track left to right, etc). If your child is older, you may want to point out the title and author. You may want to discuss the picture on the front of the cover as a way to “set the stage” for the story – your child might have fun predicting what she thinks is going to happen on the following pages.
- ❖ *Follow your child’s lead:* Children, especially young children, are not always ready to listen to a whole story cover to cover. It is ok to not read every word on the page. Feel free to adjust the language so that your child understands what is going on. It’s even ok to ignore the words completely sometimes and just talk about the pictures – your child will still be learning and practicing vocabulary and making the connection between spoken language and the pictures/symbols on the page. Let your child turn the pages if he wants to and if he lets you know that he is finished with the book it is ok to stop before you get to the end; let him have some control over the experience so that he continues to enjoy the reading experience.
- ❖ *Connect it to real life:* After you have put away the book you can extend the experience by making connections between what happened in the book and things happening in your daily life. For example, if you read a story about making a snowman and you later see a snowman you might comment how the snowman you see is similar to the one you read about.
- ❖ *Have fun!* The most important thing you can do as a parent when it comes to reading books with your child is make it fun and enjoyable. It is never too early to instill a love of books and reading which will stay with your child throughout his school years and beyond.

Reference: Garner, A., Fleming, A., & Guimond, L. (2005). Practical ideas for promoting literacy during the preschool years.