

Reading with Junior Children

Although life is often hectic, do try to read with your child at least once a day at a regularly scheduled time. But don't be discouraged if you skip a day or don't always keep to your schedule. Just read to your child as often as you possibly can.

If you have more than one child, try to spend some time reading alone with each child, especially if they're more than 2 years apart. As most children enjoy listening to many types of stories, children can still get the idea and can be encouraged to ask questions whatever their age. When stories are easy or familiar, older children still enjoy these "old friends" and may even help in the reading.

Taking the time to read with your children on a regular basis sends an important message: **Reading is worthwhile.** It's a good idea to talk about a story you're reading, but you needn't feel compelled to talk about every story. Good stories will encourage a love for reading, with or without conversation. Sometimes children need time to think about stories they've read. A day or so later, don't be surprised if your child mentions something from a story you've read together.

20 Ways to Encourage Reading

1. Scout for things your children might like to read. Use their interests and hobbies as starting points.
2. Leave all sorts of reading materials including books, magazines, and colourful catalogues in conspicuous places around your home.
3. Notice what attracts your children's attention, even if they only look at the pictures. Then build on that interest; read a short selection aloud, or simply bring home more information on the same subject.
4. Let your children see you reading for pleasure in your spare time.
5. Take your children to the library regularly. Explore the children's section together. Ask a librarian to suggest books and magazines your children might enjoy.
6. Present reading as an activity with a purpose—a way to gather useful information for, say, making paper airplanes, identifying a doll or stamp in your child's collection, or planning a family trip.
7. Encourage older children to read to their younger brothers and sisters. Older children enjoy showing off their skills to an admiring audience.
8. Play games that are reading-related. Check your closet for spelling games played with letter tiles or dice, or board games that require players to read spaces, cards, and directions.
9. Perhaps over dinner, while you're running errands, or in another informal setting, share your reactions to things you read, and encourage your children to do likewise.
10. Set aside a regular time for reading in your family, independent of schoolwork—the 20 minutes before lights out, just after dinner, or whatever fits into your household schedule. As little as 10 minutes of free reading a day can help improve your child's skills and habits.
11. Read aloud to your child, especially a child who is discouraged by his or her own poor reading skills. The pleasure of listening to you read, rather than struggling alone, may restore your child's initial enthusiasm for books and reading.
12. Encourage your child to read aloud to you an exciting passage in a book, an interesting titbit in the newspaper, or a joke in a joke book. When children read aloud, don't feel they have to get every word right. Even good readers skip or mispronounce words now and then.
13. On gift-giving occasions, give books and magazines based on your child's current interests.
14. Set aside a special place for children to keep their own books.
15. Introduce the bookmark. Remind your youngster that you don't have to finish a book in one sitting; you can stop after a few pages, or a chapter, and pick up where you left off at another time. Don't try to persuade your child to finish a book he or she doesn't like. Recommend putting the book aside and trying another.
16. Treat your children to an evening of laughter and entertainment featuring books! Many children (parents, too) regard reading as a serious activity. A joke book, a story told in riddles, or a funny passage read aloud can reveal another side of reading.

17. Extend your child's positive reading experiences. For example, if your youngster enjoyed a book about dinosaurs, follow up with a visit to a natural history museum.

18. Offer other special incentives to encourage your child's reading. Allow your youngster to stay up an extra 15 minutes to finish a chapter; promise to take your child to see a movie after he or she has finished the book on which it was based; relieve your child of a regular chore to free up time for reading.

19. Limit your children's television viewing in an effort to make time for other activities, such as reading. But never use TV as a reward for reading, or a punishment for not reading.

20. Not all reading takes place between the covers of a book. What about menus, road signs, food labels, and sheet music? Take advantage of countless spur-of-the-moment opportunities for reading during the course of your family's busy day.

Source: RIF Parent Guide Brochure.

Questioning your child whilst they are reading

Literal questions:

These are simple, recall type questions where children are asked a fact from within the story (i.e., the information is literally within the text).

For example: "What was the pirate's name?" "Can you remember who was on the boat?" "What happened after they got off the boat?"

These questions are great for younger readers, but you can also ask more complex literal questions. For example, ask your child to summarise the main idea/events in the story, this requires them to rephrase the story in their own words. Or, ask them to recall comparisons between characters/events/places in the story.

Literal questions are a good way of assessing your child's memory and understanding of the story, but as they get older, also introduce inference and evaluative type questions.

Inference questions:

Inference questions need children to look beyond the text and give information that was not specifically provided, but which was implied (i.e., children need to 'read between the lines').

For example, "What do you think happened next?" "Why do you think he did that?" "How do you think the pirate felt when he was left behind?"

These questions typically require a greater level of cognitive and language skill than literal questions (both to know the answer and explain the answer). However, it is a skill that even young children are able to do, if the inference question is appropriate for their age and level of language/cognitive ability.

Explaining their thoughts clearly, is a useful skill to develop.

Evaluative Questions:

Evaluative questions require children to read behind and beyond the lines; that is, evaluate information within the story based on their own personal knowledge and experience.

In these types of questions, children should be encouraged to give (and support) their opinion about an aspect of the story (i.e., character, action, event).

For example "Do you think he should have done that?" "Do you think the Pirates were very different from each other?" "Can you think of a similar event/situation that has happened to you?" Again this is often about being able to explain their thoughts clearly.

Decoding and understanding vocabulary:

Decoding is the ability to apply knowledge of letter-sound relationships, including knowledge of letter patterns, to correctly pronounce written **words**. Understanding these relationships gives children the ability to recognize familiar **words** quickly and to figure out **words** they haven't seen before. Use 'sounding out' to decode the word then work out the meaning of the word or phrase. Try to encourage children to use the text to decipher words or phrases that they are unsure of. This will help them establish the vocabulary in the right concept, rather than just 'learning' a long word.