

Chapter 5

Reading Aloud to Your Child



Ten Commandments For Reading to a Child:

1. Choose all books carefully.
2. Allow for processing time (his, not yours).
3. Act enthused, even if you're not.
4. What is gross to you may not be gross to a child.
5. Cultivate a sense of the ridiculous and enjoy it.
6. Point to the words as you read (it helps keep you awake).
7. Do not yawn.
8. Be prepared to read the same book over and over and...
9. Never skip a page, a phrase or a word! (You want him to trust you don't you?)
10. Set limits: "This is the last one."

Mary Kelly

(mom, grandma, educator, musician, teacher,
poet, school board member)

Reading Aloud: *One of the Best Things You Can Do With Your Child*

Reading a wonderful book to your child is probably the single most enjoyable activity we can do as parents. Snuggling together, reading, looking at the pictures, sharing thoughts, asking and answering questions. Hopefully, this is one of your daily or nightly routines.

Research states, “Perhaps no other finding in research is as well documented as the simple fact that reading regularly to young children significantly influences their understanding of what reading is all about as well as their later proficiency in reading.”¹

If we, as adults, are going to encourage children to love reading and love books, they must see parents and older siblings reading for enjoyment as well as for information. Read to them!

Here are a few tips to reading aloud. First, make it a memorable moment. Make your reading environment quiet and comfortable. Everyone can get in their jammies and get out the soft blankets, pillows, a favorite stuffed animal, and just snuggle down. Soften the lights. Maybe play some soft classical music in the background.



NOTE
: This may amaze you, but it is never too early (or too late) to start reading to
: your child! When you are holding your newborn baby, read to her/him. S/he is
: listening to every sound you make as s/he watches your lips move. Those
: speech sounds are being hard-wired into her/his brain at this time, and will be
: fully mapped out by the time your baby is 12 months old!²
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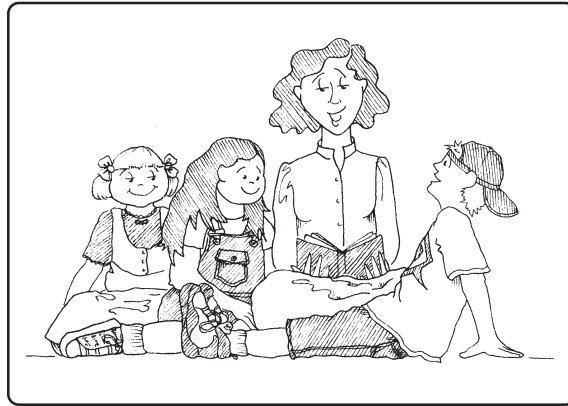
You can also read in the car, on the plane, at the beach, or in a park. Reading can be done anywhere!

It is really important that the child participate, so here are some tips for making this a successful and memorable experience for parent and child:

¹ Language and Literacy Learning in the Early Years: An Integrated Approach, Susan B. Neuman and Kathleen A. Roskos, Harcourt, Brace college Publishers, 1993

² Newsweek, Special Edition, “Your Child”, “How to Build a Baby’s Brain” by Sharon Begley, page 30. Research by Dr. Patricia Kuhl, University of Washington.

1. Allow your child to choose books that appeal to her/him. When visiting the library or bookstore, give her/him time to look and discover. Just being in this kind of environment is a wonderful experience. Make sure there are plenty of books in baskets on the floor or the bookcase where toddlers and preschoolers can easily reach them.
2. Get comfortable. Avoid the distractions of the phone ringing, TV blaring, house cleaning or bill paying!
3. Before beginning the book, look at the cover. Ask your child what s/he thinks the book is about. Read the title. What hints does the title give?
4. Look at the author's and illustrator's names. They worked hard to make that book special for children. They need to be recognized.
5. Start reading aloud. After a while, ask your child, "What do you think is going to happen next?" Ask, for example, "If you were Alfie, what would you do?" Or, "What would you have done differently if you were the little fish?" You are helping your child to develop important thinking skills as well as making your child feel that her/his opinions and thoughts are important!
6. When you are reading aloud, encourage your child to ask questions. The questions can come from either the text or the pictures.
7. Don't forget to use different voices when reading. Children love that!
8. Have your child retell parts, or all, of the story. If the child is very young, ask her/him to retell a specific scene. The next day, ask your child questions relating to the story. Can s/he tell you what the story is about? Who the main characters are? What happened in the end?
9. As you read, stop and read a key word. Ask, "What sound do you hear at the beginning of this word? What do you hear at the end? What other letter sounds do you hear?" Have her/him Signal and Sound out or read all VC/CVC words if you have



- taught her/him how to Sound Blend simple words. If you've taught the Blends or Digraphs, have her/him hunt for them on the page. Can s/he Signal and Sound them out? We call this "I read, you read." In time your child will take more responsibility for the reading.
10. Discover and read different types of books. Look for the Newberry or Caldecott Award Seals on the cover of books. Read poems. Read the classics. Read science books or magazines. Read chapter books as well as short literature books. There are also pop-up books, "feelie-books," and books that teach how to tie a bow, zip a zipper, Velcro® and button. Go online, and discover a new country, animal or children's web site. (There are many good books on children's web sites to purchase. There is a book called, "Free Curriculum Materials." It tells you all the places where you can find educational "freebies! Write to Educators Progress Service, Inc., 214 Center Street, Randolph, WI, 53956.)
 11. Visit a museum, zoo, aquarium, or art gallery. There are plenty of things to read in these places. They always have great gift stores with books or treasures to purchase!
 12. If you have an older child, encourage her/him to read to the younger child. It is good for both of them!
 13. If you are reading a fictional book, match it with a factual book. For instance, if you read, "The Very Busy Spider,"³ read books on spiders. Learn facts about them. Go out in the yard and try to find some spiders. Look closely at their webs. Count to eight. Draw a spider web on black paper with glue. Sprinkle silver glitter on it. Glue a plastic spider on the paper. Make spider web decorated sugar cookies! Memorize and move to the poem, "The Eensy, Weensy Spider."



As you watch your child grow to adulthood, s/he will let you know that s/he still remembers those wonderful times of reading aloud. And, s/he will most likely read to her/his children. Those memories last a lifetime.

³ The Very Busy Spider by Eric Carle, Philomel Books (NY) 1984