




GUIDELINES FOR READING ALOUD

The National Network for Child Care (www.nncc.org/Literacy/better.read.aloud.html) provides the following guidelines for adults when reading aloud to children:

- Allow time for the children to gather and settle in. Make sure each child is comfortable and ready to pay attention. A gentle reminder such as, "It is time to put on your listening ears," will help. (Note: avoid taking away reading time as discipline for children who misbehave. Do not associate reading with negative consequences.)
- Make yourself comfortable. Whatever your seating arrangement, a low chair, the floor, snuggled on the couch, or in a large chair, be sure that each child can see the book.
- When everyone is ready, introduce the book. Include three things:
 - 1) A short sentence or two that relates the book to your children.
 - 2) The title of the book.
 - 3) The author and/or illustrator of the book.

For example: "I know that you like to pet our big black kitty named Mittens. Today our story is about a very special orange kitty in the book called Annie and the Wild Animals. Jan Brett is the author who wrote the story. She also illustrated the book with beautiful pictures."

- Point to the title as you say it, as well as the name(s) of the author and/or illustrator. Use the words 'Author' and 'Illustrator.' Explain that the author writes the story and the illustrator draws the pictures. Sometimes the same person does both. Gradually children will begin to ask for their favorites. 
- Move the book around, either as you read or at the end of the page, so that each child can see the illustrations. This is very important because the children are "reading" the pictures as you read the words. In picture storybooks, the illustrations show a lot of the story action. Try not to block the illustrations with your arm as you turn the pages.
- Read with expression. Change the pitch (high-low), tone (gentle-rough), and volume (soft-loud) of your voice to show different characters or create a mood.
- Pace your reading to fit the story. Let your voice reflect anticipation. A short pause can create suspense. Do not read too quickly. The children need enough time to look at the pictures and think about what they are hearing.
- Get involved. Let your facial expressions show the story content by smiling, frowning, showing surprise, anger, etc.
- Point to characters or objects in the pictures as you read about them. Show motion, as when Peter slides down the hill in The Snowy Day by Ezra Jack Keats. Drop blueberries into a small metal pail to echo the sound, "Kuplink, Kuplunk, Kuplunk," in Blueberries for Sal by Robert McCloskey. Mimic Max's magic trick of "staring into all their yellow eyes without blinking," in Where the Wild Things Are by Maurice Sendak. Don't take away from the story with too many extra motions. Use only those which seem natural and comfortable for you.
- Ask the children to take part in any story that has a repetitive phrase. For example, they will enjoy repeating, "Hundreds of cats, Thousands of cats, Millions and billions and trillions of cats," in Millions of Cats by Wanda Gag or, "Terrible, horrible, no good, very bad day" in Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day by Judith Viorst.
- When you have finished reading, close the book and say, "And that's the story of Annie and the Wild Animals. Wait a few moments. This gives the children time to ask questions or make comments. Do not ask, "Did you like the story?" or "Wasn't that a good story?" They will want to please you with a "yes" answer and may not give their true ideas.
- If a child says they have already heard the story you are about to read, say, "Oh! I'm so glad" or "Isn't that wonderful. You will need to listen very carefully and see if it's exactly the same story you already know. I'll check with you when we're finished." Be sure to follow through. The child will probably remind you.
- Remember: reading aloud does not come naturally to everyone. Doing it successfully comes with practice.☆

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