



The Most Important 20 Minutes of Your Day

READING ALOUD TO YOUR CHILD

What's so great about reading aloud? Let's start with better brains. Hearing a story being told or read aloud is the single best way to generate brain activity in your child. Reading

aloud fires up a child's brain because the child has to imagine what is going on in the story. This stimulates the brain's electrical system, creating strong pathways, and greater imagination and creativity. Compare this with watching television. The average child watches 15,000 hours of TV before starting school, but this generates only 15 minutes of brain activity.

Reading aloud can positively affect a child's school performance. Many children today have poor listening skills. Reading aloud can help them improve their listening ability, so that they can stay more engaged in school and absorb their lessons from the teacher.

The best way to learn language is through hearing it. There are 44 sounds in the English language—*Goodnight Moon*, *Make Way for Ducklings* and *Charlotte's Web* contain all 44 sounds. Children learn vocabulary, language patterns, and sentence structure by listening to language. Reading aloud is especially valuable for older children because they can easily understand a story that is 2 to 3 grades above their reading level.

Stories are also life's compass. They help to pass along values and wisdom to our children. Choosing the best stories, you and your child can go on wonderful adventures together, with characters who are exploring subjects like truth, fairness, courage, and compassion—and how to make the right choices in difficult situations.

Children need actual physical time with their parents. A study published in *USA Today* reported that on average, parents spend less than seven minutes a week talking with their children. Reading aloud is quality time that creates opportunities for talking and sharing. It promotes emotional closeness and bonding.

Reading aloud is free, it's simple, it's universal, and it is effective. All parents have within them the power to help their children through this simple and effective tool. So don't wait, get started with reading aloud today. It is the most important twenty minutes of your day!

TURN OVER FOR TIPS TO GET YOU STARTED READING ALOUD!

Getting Started with Reading Aloud

TIPS FOR PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS

- 1. Find the right book for your child.** The emotional level of the book should not be too mature or intense for your child. The amount of narrative needs to be appropriate—not too long—and the plot should reflect topics that interest your child. The book should be fun, exciting, and interesting for both of you.
- 2. Visit the library for a book or a recorded book.** Library youth specialists have knowledge of children’s literature and can help you find the perfect book for you and your child. Get a library card and make sure your child has one too. If you don’t feel completely comfortable reading aloud at first, you can try a book on tape or CD and listen together—but you should stop everything else and sit together just as if you were reading the book.
- 3. Let your child participate in the selection of the book.** Preview the book first to make sure that you are comfortable with the content. You can always skip passages that you feel are not right for you and your child. If the book turns out not to be of interest then stop! Find another book. Remember, this is supposed to be fun. It is also okay to read books more than once. Just as you may enjoy hearing a favorite story repeated, a child enjoys hearing stories read many times as he or she explores new worlds.
- 4. Choose books that are above a child’s reading level, but on the child’s listening level.** There is a big difference between these two levels. A 5-year-old child is usually capable of listening to the book *Charlotte’s Web*, with several thousand words in it—versus hearing *The Cat in the Hat* with a couple of hundred words or less. Which one is the more enriching experience?
- 5. Create a special time and place for reading aloud.** You want to set the mood for this time together. Think about a comfortable or favorite place in your home. Add some pillows and make sure there is good lighting. You can even decorate a box or a basket to keep your books together nearby. Sit close to your child and make eye contact—smile, show affection, sit touching.
- 6. Talk with your child about the book.** Research has shown that children get more out of a story when they have the chance to talk about it. Involve your child in the story by asking such questions as “What do you think is going to happen now?” “Did that last part scare you?” or “Why do you think he did that?” Be conversational, it is not a test.
- 7. Be a ham! Read with expression and feeling.** Try different sounds and voices—make the door creeeak! and the snake hisssss! Use pacing by reading slower or faster as the story changes. Find voices for characters that show what they are like. But remember that just reading together is the main thing that your child will remember, not your dramatic ability.
- 8. Cultivate the habit of reading aloud by making a commitment.** For some families it may take time to feel comfortable with reading aloud and to enjoy it fully. But with a little practice you can be the reading role model in your child’s life!



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