

The Best Things About Books

Book reading is a special time for you and your child, when you both enjoy a feeling of closeness. But more than that, books connect your child to the world – her own world and new worlds. They transport her to interesting places and situations, many of which she has never seen.



*Brian is fascinated by
The Little Engine That Could.*



When Brian goes on a train one day soon, his Mom will remind him about The Little Engine That Could so he can connect a real train with the one in his book.

One of the best things about books is that the pictures and words are always there to be read again and again. Unlike speech, which “disappears” as soon as we finish talking, the stories and words in books come back to us the same way each time we read the book. This makes learning new words and ideas much easier for your child.

The earlier you begin to read and tell stories to your child, the sooner reading will become an important and enjoyable part of her life. Reading aloud to your child is the most important thing you can do to build the knowledge she needs to learn to read. Try to make reading part of every day. Take a book along wherever you go – to a doctor’s appointment, on the bus, in the car, to the grocery store ... anywhere. You can even take plastic or vinyl books into the bath.

Turn Book Reading into a Conversation

When you read with your child – regardless of her stage of communication – keep these guidelines in mind:

- Get face to face
- OWL and let your child “read” the book her way
- Give your child a chance to take turns
- Change the words in the book
- Use the Four S’s – **S**ay Less, **S**tress, **G**o **S**low and **S**how
- Repeat, repeat, repeat

Get Face to Face: An important part of reading with your child is sitting close together and being able to see each other’s faces. When you’re sharing books, you may find it a little difficult at first being face to face and sharing a book at the same time, but it’s important to find a way. This chapter’s illustrations will show you a few ways to do this.

OWL and Let Your Child “Read” the Book Her Way: Story time is a time for conversation, not just sitting and listening. To get the most out of being read to, your child needs to be actively involved. When you think she’s ready, let her choose the book, hold it and turn the pages. Once you’ve read what’s on a page and shown her the pictures, give her time to look at the page and wait to see what she does or says. Spend more time on the pages she’s most interested in. At first, your child will probably sit for only a few minutes when you’re reading to her. If you let her “read” the book her way, she’ll enjoy sharing books more and, over time, she’ll be ready to sit for longer and look at books more often.

There’s more than one way to read a book.

- You don’t have to start at the beginning.
- You can skip pages or not finish the book.
- You can just talk about the pictures and not read the words.
- You can change the words.
- You can read the same book over and over again, even in one sitting.

Give Your Child a Chance to Take Turns: When you read to your child, you shouldn't be the only one communicating. Give her opportunities to take turns throughout the activity. Don't think of reading as something you do to your child. Think of it as something you and your child do *together*.

Birdie. Birdie
goes bye-bye.



Mom changes the words in the book and adds a gesture to make sure Graham understands.

Change the Words in the Book: Feel free to change the words in the book and to tell the story in your own simple words. Not all children's books are well-written, and some have words in them that are much too difficult for your child to understand. Change the words in the book so they're easier for your child to understand and so you can repeat them. The more often she hears the words, the more likely she is to understand them and try to imitate them.

Use the Four S's – Say Less, Stress, Go Slow and Show: It's better to say less when reading a book. Use familiar vocabulary and shorter sentences to help your child understand and learn. **Stress** important and interesting words and add sound effects that your child will enjoy, like the sounds of animals or cars. Make stories come alive by creating different voices for the characters and using actions and facial expressions to make them really interesting. **Go slow** – tell the story at a slower pace – to make it easier for your child to understand the words and to give her time to take her turn. **Show** your child what the words mean by pointing to the pictures as you talk about them and by using actions and gestures. Use toys or other objects to bring stories to life. For example, if you're reading a story that has a ball in it, have your child's own ball close by so the two of you can roll it and throw it – just like the characters do in the book.

Repeat, Repeat, Repeat: Children love hearing the same stories again and again – even after you've grown tired of them. Every time you read a story to your child, you have a chance to repeat the same words and sentences. But it's not enough for your child to hear the words many times. Particularly if she is a First Words User or a Combiner, she needs a chance to talk about what you're reading and to imitate the words. The more chances your child has to talk to you about the ideas in the book and the more she hears you repeat some of these words, the more her vocabulary will grow.