



MANORFIELD C.E. PRIMARY SCHOOL
CARING, SHARING, INSPIRING

Reading to your child: A Parent's Guide

Where?
Who?
How?



When?
Why?
What?





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Why?



The overwhelming majority of children love being read aloud to at home as this is a special time with their parents. 31% of children whose parents have stopped reading to them wished that they hadn't! The number of children read to frequently drops considerably over the first 11 years. 77% are read to often from 0-5 years; 37% from 6-8 years and only 20% from 9-11 years.

Research has repeatedly shown that the most accurate predictor of a pupil's achievement is not parental income or social status but the extent to which parents create a home environment that encourages reading.

"The single most important activity for building the knowledge required for eventual success in reading is reading aloud to children."

Words are the primary structure for learning. There are really only two efficient ways to get words into a person's brain: either by seeing them or by hearing them. Since it will be years before young children use their eyes for advanced reading, the best source for vocabulary and brain building becomes the ear.

Those meaningful sounds in the ear now will help the child make sense of the words coming in through the eye later when learning to read. We read to children for all the same reasons we talk with children: to reassure, to entertain, to bond, to inform or explain, to arouse curiosity, and to inspire. But in reading aloud, we also:

- **build vocabulary**
- **condition the child's brain to associate reading with pleasure**
- **create background knowledge**
- **provide a reading role model**
- **plant the desire to read**

Parents and the home environment are essential to the early teaching of reading and fostering a love of reading; children are more likely to continue to be readers in homes where books and reading are valued (Clark and Rumbold, 2006).



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Who?

In short, any family and friends can be a great person to read to your children. Older siblings, grandparents, aunts and uncles can all include reading as part of the time they spend with children. Involve your children in what you are reading - talk about what you have read and what you liked about the story. The more people your child sees reading, the more they will want to read too.

Role models are important. Make sure boys see their dads, uncles or granddads reading, even if it's a newspaper, so that it seems familiar and they can copy their reading behaviour. Over the course of a year researching the impact that parents reading had upon their children the study leader, Dr Elisabeth Duursma, found that girls in particular benefited more when read to by a male. "The impact is huge - particularly if dads start reading to kids under the age of two," explains Duursma. "Reading is seen as a female activity and kids seem to be more tuned in when their dad reads to them - it's special."

Unfortunately a recent poll - of 1,000 mums and dads - by the charity Book Trust found that young parents especially are reading less to their children than older generations. Just 19% of dads under 25 said they enjoyed a bedtime read with their children - whilst 78% of older fathers said it was their favourite part of the day.

Author and comedian David Walliams has since led an initiative to get more dads reading stories to their children, emphasising to fathers the many benefits that reading for just 20 minutes a day can have upon their kids ... and themselves.

Research published by the British Journal of Educational Psychology into the role of early father involvement and its impact upon children's educational attainment showed "a positive relationship between the amounts of literacy fathers engage in for their personal use and their children's reading test." Dads who are seen to be reading a lot around the home - books, newspapers, magazines etc - send out a positive sign to their children that it's an enjoyable thing to do.

But it's not just your child's language and literacy - along with your own Gruffalo impersonations - that will improve if you read to your kids at night. The Fatherhood Institute found that children whose dads read to them regularly displayed better behaviour and concentration at school, and performed better at maths too.



Even in families where childcare has been disrupted by divorce or separation, the influence of dads when it came to encouraging their children to read has been found to be a key factor in the ongoing educational progress of boys especially.





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When?

How often should I read to my child, and how long for?

Be guided by how long they will listen. For younger children this may be quite short periods of time, while slightly older children may be readier to listen for longer. As for how often, there's no right answer, but many experts suggest a routine helps. For school-age children, a bedtime story can be a nice way for you to spend a small amount of time together and wind down after a busy day. For pre-school children, shorter bursts of reading throughout the day may be a good idea but, again, be guided by how long your child will listen



Read whenever you get the chance - Bring along a book or magazine for any time your child has to wait, such as at a doctor's surgery.

Make sure your child isn't tired, hungry or desperate to watch their favourite TV programme when you read to them. Sit with them for a short time every day and read a book with them on a subject that interests them, whether that's cars, animals or sports. Don't expect them to read it for themselves. Just show them how interesting it is to be able to read so that they want to do it for themselves.

Take books with you so you always have a story to share. You can read on the train or bus, or even if you are waiting in a queue together. When you are outside, take time to notice what is going on around you. Make up stories about what you see with your child. • Bedtime is the perfect time to read together. It helps create a routine and can make going to bed something your child looks forward to. It is a special time for a parent and child to share.





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Where?

Get comfortable! - Snuggle up somewhere warm and cosy with your child, either in bed, on a beanbag or on the sofa.

If you prefer though, reading doesn't have to be a 'sitting' activity. Get up, tell stories as you walk, go out to the garden, local park or setting that fits the story to add extra atmosphere and aid imagination. Stand up and get children to act-out parts of the story or pretend to be characters; it all adds to the understanding of the book.



Make books, magazines and newspapers part of your family life - Always have books around so that you and your children are ready to read whenever there's a chance.

Join your local library - Get your child a library card. You'll find the latest videogames, blu-rays and DVDs, plus tons and tons of fantastic books. Allow them to pick their own books, encouraging their own interests.

Bedtime stories - Regularly read with your child or children at bedtime. It's a great way to end the day and to spend valuable time with your child.





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What?

When it comes to instilling a love of reading, it doesn't really matter what you read. The important thing is that we all help to inspire our children to feel confident and comfortable reading. Ask yourself what type of reading the book is for. Is it a book they have got from school to help practise reading and build fluency? Is it a book that they find easy to read that helps them build confidence? Is it a book for you to read for pleasure to your child?



With hundreds of books in your local library, school or bookshop, it can be hard to know where to start when choosing a book for your child. Remember that as adults we like to re-read favourite books, relax with a magazine or tackle something challenging. Children are the same, so encourage choices - maybe a familiar book for re-reading as well as something new. Don't show disapproval if your child returns to favourites. You can find advice on what books children of different ages might enjoy reading on the Puffin website: www.puffin.co.uk

If you're stuck for something to catch your children's imaginations, it might be worth asking their teacher or a librarian for some advice. For ease, the bookseller Waterstones has pulled together a list of the top 50 books for children of primary school age. They're all classics, so it's worth having a look for a bit of inspiration.





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How?



For most of us, reading aloud isn't part of everyday life, so the thought of reading a story to your child may be a bit daunting. But don't let this put you off - your children will be enjoying themselves too much to criticise your performance!

As you read to your child, try to bring the characters to life - talk about the characters, the drawings and the events so that the story starts to come alive.

Don't be afraid to try different voices or try out your acting skills. While you may not win an Oscar, your child will enjoy your performance and appreciate the story even more.

Remember that your face says it all - so try and exaggerate your normal expression times three like a children's TV presenter: children will love it.

Emphasise repeated words and phrases ('the big bad wolf'; '... blew, and blew, and blew the house down'). In this way, your child starts to learn the language used in books.

Encourage your child to say the words with you.

Turn off the television and concentrate on enjoying the book.

Try audio books that children can listen to on the car stereo, on computers or phones - this is a great way to build a child's understanding of stories and improve their listening.

Respected author Neil Griffiths has produced a fantastic series of videos on reading to your children aimed at KS1 parents they can be found on Youtube:

Reading to Children - Tips & Techniques - "Itchy Bear" Neil Griffiths - ELC

Reading To Children - Tips & Techniques - "Sneezy Bear" by Neil Griffiths - ELC

For KS2 aged children David Walliams shows a great example of reading out loud on Youtube:

David Walliams | Gangsta Granny | Book Reading



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