

PUT SOME PIZZAZZ IN YOUR READ-ALOUDS

BY DORIT SASSON

Parents are important figures in molding reading experiences and expectations.

Do you ever wonder what you can do to enhance the reading experience for your child?

Children too young to attend school still can learn what it means to be able to read and write. This developmental process is called emergent literacy. For 2- to 3-year-olds, the ideal read-aloud experience is not only about reading the story, but about personalizing the experience to make it enjoyable and memorable for the child.

Here are a few tips for enhancing the read-aloud experience as you build your child's foundation in literacy.

Why read-alouds?: Read-alouds help build the routine of reading while building a special bond between a parent and a child. Make it a very unique and personal time when you can relax, snuggle, and enjoy books together.



Children pick up on their parents' enthusiasm for reading.

Read the books you once connected with and still do: There is something magical about reading *Corduroy* or *Whistle Willie*. Suddenly, I am transplanted back to the '70s again, in my old room, remembering how I felt when I identified with being lost and alone in the dark. A parent's excitement is infectious in sharing a book he or she loved as a child and can inspire the toddler to appreciate the experience of reading.

Pictures and perspectives: Pictures are valuable text material. Use the pictures in books as meeting points for you and your child to connect and to check how well your child comprehends. Ask your child two to three simple open-ended questions at critical points in the story. When the dramatic tension builds from the perspective of a 3-year-old, stop a moment. Will *Corduroy*, the small, lov-

able brown bear, be found? Will he stay overnight in a department store? The concept of being alone in the dark is very scary for young children.

Read short nonfiction texts, too: Easy nonfiction texts such as the Pebble Series published by Capstone Texts make wonderful short read-alouds, perfect for an average 3-year-old's attention span. Because repetition contributes to learning, these books work well.

Early nonfiction texts typically have two or three sentences so they don't overwhelm a child with information, yet hold a young child's interest.

Dramatize the story: Stories are meant to be acted out and personalized. If you can connect to the characters in a story, then acting them out shouldn't be a problem. Here are some specific tips:

PARENTS AND READING

- Use lots of expression, different voices, and sound effects when appropriate.
- Read books that play with language by using tongue twisters, rhymes, and riddles. Such books lend themselves to the natural, spontaneous, and fun elements of reading.
- Don't underestimate the quirky and funny elements of storytelling. Quirky characters and funny elements can generate a variety of reactions and funny responses. You are, in fact, being a good role model by reading books that you get a kick out of.

Reflect on your reading: You know you did something right when after you've finished reading your child's favorite book, he or she wants to read it to you. If you chose a book based on your early reading experiences and shared your enthusiasm for it, chances are you will have maximized the reading experience for your child.

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