

How to Read a Book (with a young child)

Whether you read with young students at school or at home, reading is not quite as simple as opening a book and reading the words. Consider the following suggestions to make it a meaning-filled event.

1. Let the child select from a small handful of books.

Select a variety of books: poetry, non-fiction, fiction, graphic novel, picture book, how-to book, etc. Limit the number of books in the selection so you will have more time to read rather than using a majority of your time to make a selection.

2. Let the child find a cozy place to read.

Suggest a spot on the floor, a sofa, a bean bag or across a bed. There needs to be room for the two of you to sit together without feeling squished. It helps if the space is quiet, well-lit and inviting.

3. If you read the book TO the child.

Sit so both of you can see the words, illustrations and photos right-side up. Use your finger to underscore the words as you read them. That tracking will help the youngest child learn to follow sentences left to right. For primary children, it reinforces what the words look like as they are spoken. Stop periodically and ask questions or discuss the action in the story.

4. If you read the book WITH the child.

Sit so both of you can see the words, illustrations and photos right-side up. Decide how you will share reading the text: one sentence each, one page each, one story character each, or the child reads most everything, allowing you to help with difficult words.

As in reading *to* a child, use your finger to underscore the words as you read your portion of the text. Encourage the child to track or use a bookmark under words/sentences when he/she reads. Stop periodically and ask questions or discuss the action in the story.

5. If the child reads the book TO YOU.

Again, sit so the pages are right-side up for both of you. Encourage the child to stop at punctuation marks. Invite them to read with expression. Remember to periodically to discuss the action in the story.

6. Ask questions as you read.

Discuss interesting or challenging words, new ideas the text reveals, what may come next, surprises in the story, etc. Ask open-ended questions that ~~Be certain the questions~~ can not be answered by 'yes' or 'no' since you want to invite a discussion to encourage critical listening and thinking. (Do we need to explain what an open-ended question is to young, possibly lower educated parents? *Open-ended questions typically begin with words such as "Why" and "How", or phrases such as "Tell me about...". Often they are not technically a question, but a statement that implicitly asks for a response.*

If you are reading with two or more children:

Find a place where you can sit between or among the children. That way you can control the situation so they share holding and reading the book. They usually want to share the adult so become an active part of the reading. Follow the above ideas, making sure to include everyone.

Reading a book with a child sets up the skills and shares the importance of reading as a life long practice.