

Reasons to Encourage Children to Read Aloud

In this day of the electronic babysitter, where children can be set in front of the telly and subjected to colourful and sometimes even educational television programming, the lowly but venerable picture book is often forgotten in the shuffle. Along with it has largely vanished the charming tradition of old to pick up a book and read to your child. Perhaps you can recall nursery rhymes learned by the fireplace or in a cosy nook, cuddled against mum or dad and focused on the pleasant drum of their voices. Far from being simply a charming tradition however, it serves quite a real, measurable benefit for children and the earlier you can begin, the better.

When Parents Read Aloud

Reading aloud to your child promotes many beneficial beliefs and habits. When a child sees her parents reading and enjoying the activity, she equates reading with something pleasurable and is likely to gravitate towards it. When she hears her parents reading to her she feels connected, encouraged and important. Reading to your little one is a marvellous time for you both ripe with meaningful interaction and outcome.

Studies have shown that children who are read to regularly have stronger strategic thinking skills and do better in school and speech, performing at advanced levels. The pronunciation of words and their weaving together in a tapestry of spoken images is demonstrated by a parent who reads aloud a story, a poem, a sonnet, a newspaper, a magazine or anything written. Sharing this kind of quality time with a child can make a huge difference in their literacy level later in life and is an investment in the future of your children. Aside from developing listening skills, the steady read from an adult is the difference of night and day when compared to the stumbling through of a peer. Hearing and seeing unfamiliar words expands vocabulary and instil a sense of confidence when the time comes for the child to read aloud. In addition, you have a genuine chance to expose your little one to a variety of different literary styles and formats, an advantage in the classroom or the business realm.

What a Child Gains

Aside from all the wondrous gifts gained by a parent reading aloud to a child, still more is garnered by encouraging the child to read aloud with the parent when the skill presents itself. A child encouraged to read out loud with patient correction and along with an adult gives more practice, which makes it easier to do. The easier such a task is, the better the child will be at it. The better he is at it, the more he is likely to do it. It's a circle that ends well for everyone, culminating in better scholastic achievements, generally better pay as a professional adult, keener listening skills and broader imagination.

Long before your child can read, he will know the words to a beloved book and speak them from rote as though he were reading himself. This is a brilliant display of imagination and memorisation abilities. More than likely he will employ the same inflections and animations of voice he has heard from you. As many parents have undoubtedly discovered with some chagrin, children love to hear endless repetitions of their favourite stories and rhymes. It is how they learn and while it may seem a source of small annoyance to an adult, it is beneficial and even necessary for a child. Patiently indulge them if at all possible; you are providing more for that little one than you can imagine.

Children of all ages, even as young as newly born, gain much from an adult reading aloud to them. It is

known that a baby's brain is roughly 25% formed when born but the rest develops over the first year outside the womb. Hearing literature read out loud assists in brain development, speech and simple bonding. Some go so far to say that if every child were read three stories aloud for thirty minutes a day every day, illiteracy would be stamped out within a generation. Consider the power of that statement a moment.

How to Read Aloud to Your Child

It seems rather simple: grab a book and read, but there are some tips Readers are Leaders suggests that may help you both in this marvellous and special time.

- Choose a story *you* will enjoy reading, as well. The objective is to make the experience enjoyable for you both.
- Create an intimate space such as a reading nook that is comfortable and inviting. Make it your special place for your child to read aloud and to herself, peppering it with a variety of reading materials.
- Ask some simple questions about the pictures in the book, conjecture of what the book holds from the front cover, and encourage guesses on what might happen later in the story now and then.
- If any part of the story relates to your child or an experience she had, point it out and discuss it briefly. Discuss emotions expressed in the story.
- Words that are advanced for your child should not be ignored but explained and offer a substitute to help illustrate the meaning. This builds vocabulary.
- Choose a book that is appropriate to age but occasionally advanced in level granting them a peek into what is in store later and offering them a challenge.
- Children learn best in chunks of information. Therefore teaching the whole word so that is recognisable on sight is more effective than teaching individual letters as the basis of beginning reading.

Clearly the benefits of reading out loud to your child, niece, nephew, or grandchild are worth every effort to incorporate the event into your daily routine. Readers truly are leaders when caring adults and elder siblings take the time to read to infants and young children on a daily basis for at least fifteen minutes a day. Enjoy yourself and be a good model to follow when it comes to having fun with the written word in its wonderful myriad of forms!