

Information for parents and teachers

Selecting and reading appropriate books for 2 to 8 year old children

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Reading is one of the most important activities you can do with your children. Books, of all different kinds, can have a great significance in a child's life.

Books do for children, the same thing they do for adults: they inform, they stimulate, delight, amuse, and transport us all into other worlds of thought and experience. Most importantly, they make us think and feel and respond, and they put us in intimate touch with the best that has been known and thought.

(A Note to Grownups, 1985)

How can I help my child with reading?

The answer to this question can be summed up in five statements:

1. Read to your child every night.
 2. Have your child read to you every night.
 3. Read with your child every night.
 4. Read your own books in front of your child.
 5. Take turns with your child reading aloud from the same book.
- Read to your child as often as possible and let your child see you read and enjoy books. Read all different types of print, for example, letters, cards, newspapers, TV programs, picture books, novels, magazines, street signs, recipes and even the telephone directory.
 - Join your local library and make it a habit to visit the library with your child at least once a fortnight so you and your child can both borrow books. Allow your child to select his or her own book and put it in his or her own library bag. The local librarian will always be delighted to assist you if asked for advice on appropriate books to borrow.
 - Make or buy a cloth bag in which to store books that you carry in the car. Many local libraries have such bags for sale relatively

inexpensively. Your child could use fabric paints to design and put his or her name on the bag?

- Suggest that family members and friends give books as presents for important occasions. Have the giver write on the inside front cover when and why the book has been given. This can form the basis for your child's own collection of books. Book plates can also be made on a computer or purchased at many book sellers.
- Before reading a book talk about the title of the book, the author's name and the illustration on the cover. If the book has many pictures encourage your child to make comments about the pictures. Talk about who may be in the pictures, the colours used and the types of illustrations. It could be a line drawing, a collage, a photograph or a cartoon. When reading remember to sit on a comfortable chair and sit beside your child or have him or her sit on your lap so he or she can easily see the pictures, 'read' the story and help turn the pages.
- When reading, it is a good idea to pause occasionally to ask your child to predict what may happen next in the story or how he or she may think the chapter or the story may conclude. This also indirectly tests comprehension and understanding.
- Ask your child if he or she liked or enjoyed a particular book. Can he or she give you a reason for his or her opinion, for example: "I did not like this story because the ending was very sad." "I did not like this character because he was not kind to his friend."
- Parents with acting skills can act out stories as they read them. Allow your voice to take on different tones, as you become different characters in the story being read. Your child can also act out particular parts of the story or ad lib a section.



- When driving in the car or visiting the local shops, discuss the different types of print and how many words are around you. For example, "The apples are on sale. They are \$1.00 for ten." "How many could we buy for \$2.00?" "Can you read this sign?" "What does it say?" "The menu has a chocolate and a strawberry milkshake. Can you find the word 'chocolate' for me?" Point to the words as you read them so your child realises there is a relationship between the spoken word and the print on the page.
- Allow your child to select and then place posters of his or her favourite characters in his or her room. You could also help your child make a mobile of characters, places or things in his or her favourite book and hang it in his or her room or the playroom.
- Suggest your child may like to make his or her own book. If he or she cannot write or type on a computer, he or she could dictate the story to you and you could write or type it down. He or she could illustrate the book with drawings, photographs or cut out pictures from a magazine. Books made about family holidays or shared experiences, such as a special excursion, or a diary kept while travelling, will be read again and again, and will form part of the family's history. Scrap books, with or without lines in which you can paste stories and pictures are available at most large newsagents and department stores.
- Puppets, either commercially bought or hand made, and felt board stories are another way of increasing a child's language experiences. A child can use dramatic play to tell stories and develop his or her imagination. Felt can be bought at craft and sewing shops and is easy to cut out and turn into story book characters.
- When using books demonstrate and teach your child how to handle and look after books. He or she should learn how not to turn back the spine too far, to turn the pages of a book correctly, to look up an index, to identify chapter headings and to use a bookmark to keep track of his or her place in the book. Your child can also make his or her own book. Remember to cover it with clear contact to minimise damage. He or she can also learn about sharing, borrowing and returning books from friends.
- Paired reading can prove a valuable technique to assist your child develop his or her reading skills. You only need to set aside about ten minutes per day. Encourage your child to choose what he or she wants to read, however easy or difficult, and you and your child can then begin reading, with you pointing to the words as he or she reads along. When he or she feels able to read some of the words, he or she should give you a signal, for example, a tap and you should stop reading and your child should read alone until he or she comes to a difficult word or makes a mistake. You should then give the correct word (if the word is not decoded within five seconds). Your child should repeat the word and you can then join in reading aloud until he or she gives the next signal.
- Praise your child for reading words correctly and for signalling to read alone. With paired reading a child can make progress in reading at three to four times the progress made in the classroom.
- The use of taped reading books can also prove valuable for a child experiencing reading difficulties. Your child can listen to a taped story while reading along in the book as he or she goes to bed each evening. While this technique lacks the interactive element of paired reading, it can be an effective, alternative means to providing supportive reading practices. Many young children are able to use a cassette recorder, inserting, starting and stopping the tape when desired.
- Remind yourself just when you think that there is not enough time for the night's reading how short is your child's childhood. Twenty years from now your television set will still be there, but your son or daughter will no longer be your little boy or girl and you will have lost the opportunity forever.

For more Information

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