

Techniques for Reading to Children

Shared reading experiences are interactive, thought-provoking, exciting, and educational. Engaging children in active, analytic talk during book reading is more effective than simply reading without opportunities for questions and discussion.

General Guidelines

- Position yourself so both you and the children are comfortable. Make sure everyone can see the pictures. For example, sit side by side with one or two children. With a group, have the children sit in a semicircle and seat yourself slightly above them so that the children in the back can see the pictures.
- Allow your listeners, especially younger children, a few minutes to settle down to get ready to hear the story.
- Mood is an important factor in listening. Create anticipation.
- Use plenty of expression and change your tone of voice to fit the dialogue.
- Adjust your pace to fit the story. During a suspenseful part, slow down, draw your words out, and bring your listeners to the edge of their seats!
- Be enthusiastic. Read stories that you enjoy yourself.

Before Reading

- Introduce the author.
- Show the cover of the book. Ask children what they think the title might be and what the story will be about. Discuss what they know about the topic.
- Provide information about the setting, characters, and where the story takes place. With older children, talk about the genre (fiction, nonfiction, folk tale, myth, mystery, science fiction, fable).
- Set a purpose for reading and signal that the reading will begin by saying something like: *I'm going to begin reading and while I do, listen carefully to see if you can figure out what problem "Curious George" had and how it is was solved.*

During Reading

- Ask questions and make elaborations (add more information) during the read aloud. For example, questions and elaborations should help children:
 1. Understand the meanings of unfamiliar words
Sultry is a word we don't hear often. It means warm and damp, no breeze.
 2. Make predictions
What do you think will happen next? What makes you think that?
 3. More deeply interpret the meaning of the book
Do you think "Curious George" meant to be naughty by hanging by his feet?
 4. Understand difficult concepts.
What did the worm and his friends learn from each other? How can people learn from each other?
- Children will ask questions of you also. Answer their questions patiently; don't ignore them or put them off.
- Discuss the illustrations and how they relate to the story.
- Stop periodically and have children recap in their own words what has happened so far. Fill in the gaps of missing information or clarify misconceptions.

After Reading

- Give children time to reflect on and think about the reading. Ask them to describe their favorite part and why it was their favorite.
- Review the story components, such as the setting, main character's problem, how the problem was resolved.
- Ask questions to encourage children to think about why events may have happened the way they did; why people in the story behaved in a certain way; what the children would have done the same or differently and why.
- Help children make connections between the events in the story and their own lives. For example, *Have you ever felt out-of-place like "Curious George" did? How did you feel? What did you do?*
- Have children read the story to you.
- Provide follow-up activities to extend the impact of the shared reading experiences.

For more information, please contact:
United Way of Tompkins County
313 North Aurora Street
Ithaca, NY 14850
(607) 272-6286
www.uwtc.org/volunteer

THANK YOU
For Changing Lives
LIVE UNITED 