



Reading To Your Child
Written by Leanne Sayar

We know as adults the joy and pleasure we receive from reading a book. It can take us to unknown places, excite us, make us laugh, cry, intrigue us or make us want to know more. Reading books regularly to young children can be one of the most important and pleasurable tasks we can undertake.

There is nothing better than being able to snuggle up with your child and share a book. Children love being read to. They take great delight in hearing the voices we use for different characters, watching our facial expressions change as we literally 'put on a show' when we read. It can also be a bonding experience for you and your child.

There has been much research into the benefits of reading to young children from a very early age. There is no start or end point to reading to your child. We all remember our young babies sucking and chewing on the plastic book in the bath when they were infants. For young children, this is the very beginning of their interactions with books. As they get older they have books read to them with either just pictures, then graduate to having books with pictures or single words read to them. They then love being read 'stories' as we know it. Many children delight in having 'favourites' read over and over and over again! Those children will always correct you if you even dare leave a single word or phrase out.

Children learn so much about language and the world, from being read to by an adult. When we read to children they ask us many questions; sometimes too many questions about what has been said or about the pictures in the book. This is normal and really important for their development. As tedious as Question & Answer time may be, it is important to answer their questions as honestly as you can. If you don't know the answer to a question, be honest and say that you don't and find out for your child. As you read to your child, take the time to ask your child questions about the characters in the book, look at the pictures and ask them to look for or find certain things, objects, characters, places, people, animals etc. Ask who, what, when, where or why questions. By doing this, you are helping them comprehend the text and you are adding to their vocabulary.

In the pre-school years make it part of your weekly routine to visit your local library. Spend time there each week and allow your child to select books to take home. Many libraries hold weekly story time sessions for young children.

By the time a child gets to school it is estimated they have a large oral vocabulary. By reading to your child, you model oral fluency, intonation, expression and you are adding to your child's store and range of vocabulary and their knowledge about the world. From you, your child is learning about how to be a reader. It is always so exciting and enjoyable when you see your child 'pretending' to read, supposedly pointing to the words, turning the pages and sometimes remembering parts of the story by heart. These are the very beginnings of the early stages of beginning to read and should be encouraged and cherished.

Many children love audio books, either through the iPod, iPad, and other means. These audio devices are also excellent ways to help your child engage with books and literature.

Ensure your child is exposed to fiction as well as non-fiction books. When you read a non-fiction book to a child, you can teach them that it is unlike a story book and you don't need to read every page in the book as you can select, through the Contents Page, which pages and pieces of information you would like to read.

Very young children enjoy having nursery rhymes read or sung to them as well as fairy and folk tales. Many of the traditional tales have a moral to them and whilst reading those types of stories, you can comment on the moral or messages contained within them.

There is no expiry date for when you stop reading to your child. Some children love their parents reading to or with them right up until they are 12 or 13; this depends on the individual. Enjoy the many moments you share with your child reading together and know that you are playing a vital role in their overall development.

Biography:

Louise Sayar is a leading educationalist and Primary School Curriculum leader working at a leading independent school, and living in Melbourne. She has been a specialist classroom teacher for many years, and is a mother of two growing children. She loves books and is passionate about reading to children and filling the lives of small children with the wonders of story books.