

How to Raise a Reader



Tips for parents and caregivers



"Children are made readers on the laps of their parents."

Emilie Buchwald

As parent or caregiver you are your child's first, best teacher!

Kids learn about the world around them right from birth.

You can make every moment of these important early years count as you teach, nurture, talk, play, sing and read aloud together.

Whether you are the mom, dad, grandparent or nanny, a caring neighbour or family friend... you are the person who can make a difference that will last a child's lifetime.

Choose the ideas you want to explore with your child and let the fun begin!

"There are all kinds of writers. The best writers write children's books."

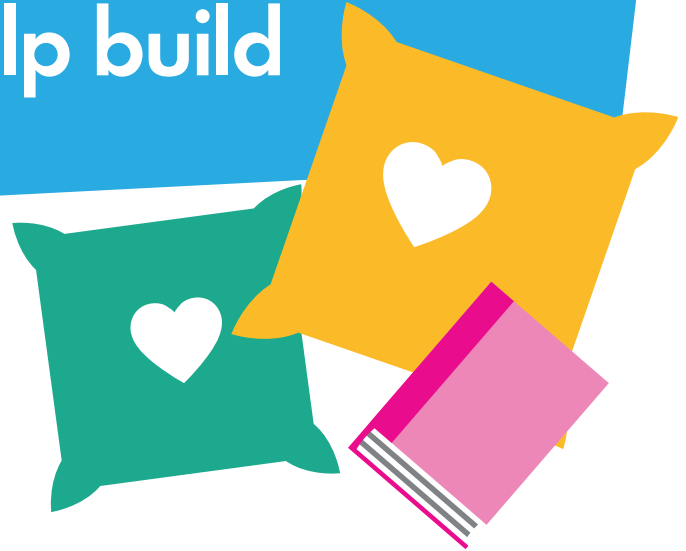
Richard Scarry



Share words, stories, songs and conversation with your child every day and help build their brain!

Read aloud from birth for at least 15 minutes each day to 'feed' your child's brain.

- Babies will enjoy being held and hearing your voice as you read the story aloud or talk about the pictures
- Being read to helps your child build their vocabulary and other literacy skills
- You will form powerful emotional bonds as you sit and cuddle together with books!



“The more that you read,
the more things you will know.
The more that you learn,
the more places you'll go.”

Dr Seuss

Why?



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A child's brain is growing incredibly fast

Babies are born with about 100 billion neurons; by age 3 there will be about 1,000 trillion connections between them. By age 3 a child's brain is about 85% of an adult sized brain and 90% by age 5 with maximal activity at that time. Our brains are sculpted by a lifetime of experiences, especially in the first few years of life.

Source: Centre on the Developing Child at Harvard University and Alberta Family Wellness Initiative

Reading aloud with your baby

Choose baby-friendly books:

- Board books with bright and bold or high-contrast illustrations
- Cloth or soft plastic books (for the bathtub)

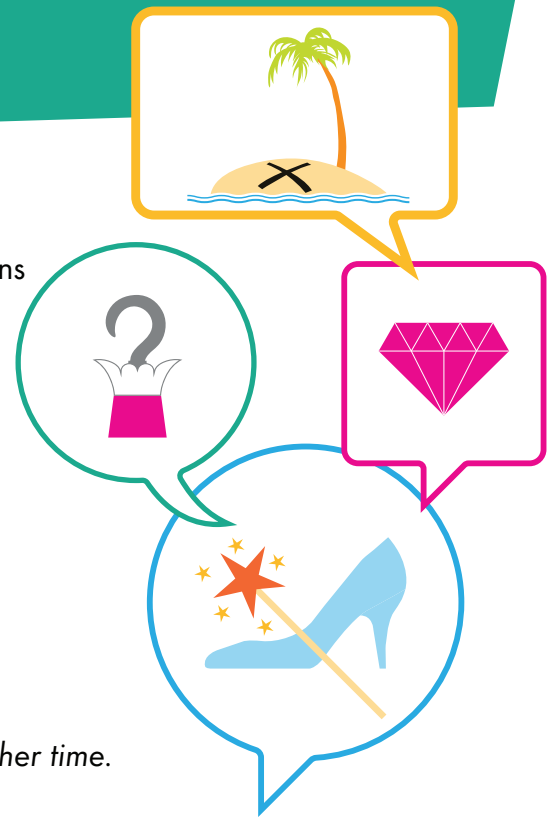
Keep books where your baby can reach them:

- As easy to hold and look at as toys
- Your baby will chew on books, make sure they are sturdy

Sing, Read, Repeat:

- Read favourite stories and sing favourite songs over and over again

If your baby isn't enjoying the story, try another book or another time.



"I can't imagine a man really enjoying a book and reading it only once."

C.S. Lewis

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Study says: Media can't teach babies to read

Despite the availability of online products claiming to help babies learn to read, these goods don't actually instill reading skills in infants, according to research appearing in the Journal of Educational Psychology.

Source: redOrbit Staff & Wire Reports, Feb. 26, 2014

Serve and return with your child

One way a solid brain foundation can be built and maintained in your developing child is through 'serve and return' interactions like an imaginary tennis match between a child and you.

Instead of hitting a ball back and forth, various forms of communication pass between you and your child.

Practice 'returning the serve' by speaking back to your child, cooing, babbling back and forth, playing peek-a-boo, or sharing a toy or laugh.

You are helping your child's brain build a solid foundation for all future learning!



“If you don't like to read, you haven't found the right book.”

J. K. Rowling

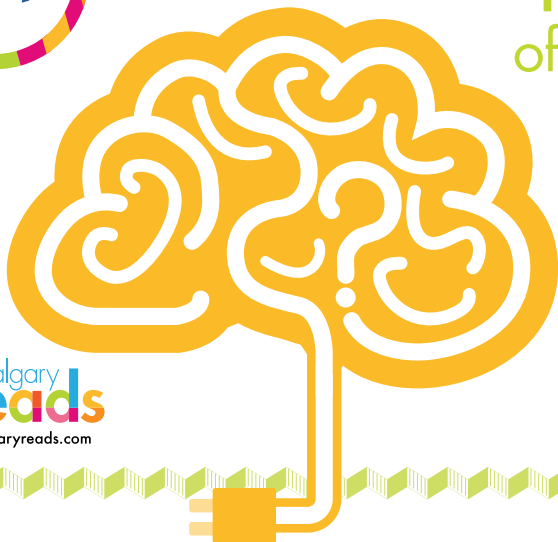
Why?

The **experiences and environment** of a young child will shape how their brain is built!

A child is born with a brain that is ready to learn. Their early experiences are “wired into” their brain, for good or for bad, shaping how their brain is built.

Source: www.2000days.ca and Alberta Family Wellness Initiative

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Talking tips

Here are ways to increase your child's exposure to words when you are talking, reading or singing together. Start as soon as they are born!

- **Make faces, use gestures**
- **Talk about** what you are doing and thinking
- **Name things** they are interested in
- **Touch, hug, hold**
- **Comment on** what they're doing or looking at
- **Get down to their level** so you are face to face
- **Tune in and respond** to what they look at, do and say
- **Wait for their response**
- **Imitate them**, and add words
- **Take turns** – don't do all the talking
- **Repeat and add** to what they say and do
- **Follow their lead**, do what interests them
- **Encourage them**, be positive
- **Be silly!** Relax and have fun!



Source: LENA Research Foundation

"A book is a gift you can open again and again."

Garrison Keillor

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concept
locution
sound
phrase
idiom
vocabulary
utterance
name
lexeme
expression
term
usage
morpheme
designation

Closing the 'word gap'

Some children growing up furthest from opportunity will hear 30 million fewer words than their peers before age 4. The number of words a child knows when they enter kindergarten is a predictor of their future success.

It is essential that parents and caregivers are aware of and practicing behaviours that encourage their children's language development right from infancy.

Source: Researchers Betty Hart and Todd Risley; and Anne Fernald

Practice the 3T's with your child

- **Tune In:** Notice what your baby or child is focused on and talk about that. Respond when your child communicates ideas, questions and emotions, including when your baby coos or cries
- **Talk More:** Narrate day-to-day routines. Use details: "How many teeth do you have now? Let's count them together... 1, 2, 3..."
- **Take Turns:** Keep the conversation going. Respond to your child's sounds, gestures and eventually words – and give them time to respond to you. Ask lots of questions

Source: Thirty Million Words Initiative <http://tmw.org/>



"A book is a dream that you hold in your hand."

Neil Gaiman

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The first 2000 days are critical

During the first 2000 days of a child's life from conception to kindergarten, more brain development occurs than at any other time in life.

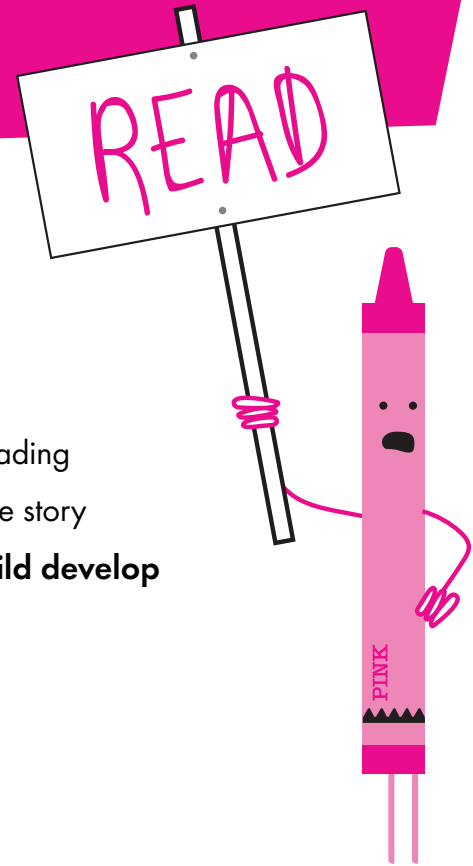
Attention to supporting optimal development during this time in a child's life has been shown to result in children experiencing better outcomes later in life: school, health, relationships, society, and communication.

Source: www.2000days.ca

Tips for reading aloud to children

- Sit close together and be sure that everyone can see the book
- Wonder together what the book is about
- Read the story joyfully and with expressions
- Point out awesome words and amazing pictures
- Take time to stop and talk about the book – during and after reading
- Notice the pictures because they often give extra clues about the story

Re-reading favourite books is encouraged! It helps your child develop their confidence and love of reading and books.



Piglet:
"How do you spell love?"



Pooh:
"You don't spell it,
you feel it."

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How a child's brain gets wired

If a child is read to, talked to, and reasoned with, he or she is using the brain circuits needed for reading, comprehension, and reasoning. Those circuits will be strengthened and stay in place.

A child who is left on his or her own for extended periods of time, watching television for example, will not use the same circuits and those circuits will not be strengthened.

Source: Centre for the Developing Child at Harvard University and Alberta Family Wellness Initiative

Before you read a new book with your child... do a book walk together

It's a way to introduce a new book and build your child's curiosity.

Talk about the title and book cover: You and your child can guess what the story is about by looking at the cover.

Walk through the pages: Take a look at the pages of the book and talk about the pictures, characters and what you see happening in the story.

Talk about the topic: Talk with your child about what he or she already knows about the topic.



Wonder together: Think about what is likely to happen. Encourage your child to do most of the talking.

Use the illustrations: Encourage your child to look at the illustrations and seek information before reading the book. Don't cover the pictures up.

Now you – or your child – are ready to read the book.

"There are perhaps no days of our childhood we lived so fully as those we spent with a favourite book."

Marcel Proust

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Books in the home lead to children who are readers

When children have their own books, they get the sense, "I'm a reader" and they reread favourites because they get to keep them.

Growing up in a home with books gives children a great advantage in school. Students who read the most, read the best, achieve the most and stay in school the longest.

Creating a 'reading place' in your home can help encourage your child's love of reading!

A reading place might be in your child's bedroom, a cozy corner in the family room, a little nook under the stairs, a hammock in the yard or... ?

Just remember the 3B's and you'll create a wonderfully welcoming spot:

Books: Lots of them! Write their name in the front of the book so it is truly theirs.

Bookshelves (or baskets, bags or other container): Place them all over the house where reading can happen anywhere,

at anytime. Be sure little ones can reach the books.

Book lights: Small, inexpensive lights (or flashlights) beside their bed to make reading possible at night time and in cozy nooks or special hiding places make reading more of an adventure.

Visit the public library to borrow books; shop at a used book store, visit the annual CBC Calgary Reads Big Book Sale; or swap books with friends.



"There is more treasure in books than in all the pirate's loot on Treasure Island.,,"

Walt Disney

Why?

This book belongs to

This book belongs to

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This book belongs to

Things that influence a child to become a lifelong reader

Book ownership – coupled with a wide variety and types of reading materials – is directly connected to higher reading scores.

A quiet, comfy place to be helps a child make the choice to spend time with books.

It's important to model reading; seeing parents and caregivers reading helps show a child that reading is valued and fun.

Nourish your child's mind and body

Nourishing your child's mind is as important as nourishing their body. Here are book-related activities you can do together as a family while you eat:

Book & Dinner: Pick a book to read as a family. It could be a picture book that can be read in one sitting, or a chapter book that you read over the course of several days. What are the characters in the book eating? Make that meal as a family, eat it together and talk about the book.

Indoor Reading Picnic: Lay a blanket on the floor. Bring a basket of books to the picnic and a few snacks such as cheese and crackers. Enjoy reading together.

Sunday Morning Comics: Pour cups of coffee for the adults and hot chocolate for the kids. Then, enjoy reading comics or graphic novels at the kitchen table.



"I'm wondering what to read next."

Matilda (Matilda by Roald Dahl)

Why?

The simplest, cheapest way to give children a healthy start: read to them

Literacy is the foundation of a good education and educational achievement is a good predictor of income.

Five per cent to 15 per cent of schoolchildren have reading delays, and most kids who have not mastered reading by the end of Grade 3 will never catch up.

Source: Globe and Mail, updated March 25, 2017

Speak to your children in your first language

Share your day with your child – describe what you're doing in your first language. Sing, play and read aloud for at least 15 minutes a day. Tell stories about the pictures if you cannot read the words on the page.

By nine months of age, your baby will have figured out which sounds in their native language are important. These sounds are the building blocks of words.

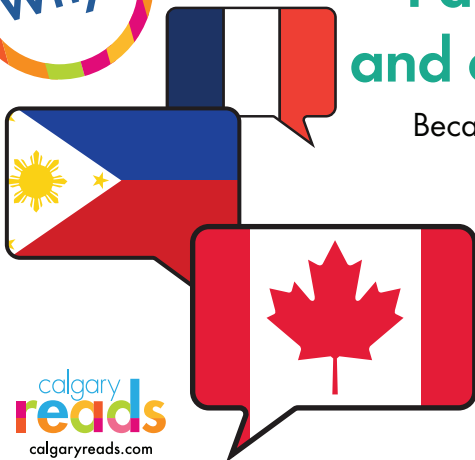
As your child develops strong first language skills they are more ready and able to learn a second language.



"There are many little ways to enlarge your child's world. Love of books is the best of all."

Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis

Why?



Parents need to talk to their babies and children in their native language

Because this is the language in which you as parent or caregiver are likely to be most dominant or proficient.

The research shows that children with strong first language skills are more ready and able to learn a second language. In other words, it's difficult to build a second language if the first language foundation is not established and supported while the second language is being learned.

Source: Ana Paula G. Mumy, speech-language pathologist

Here are ways to help your beginning reader

If your child gets stuck on a word, or misreads a word. Remember the 4P's:

PAUSE

Pause for several seconds to let your child try to solve the problem. If the child is still unsuccessful:

PROMPT

Prompt by saying "Let's try that again..." or use the Stuck-on-a-Word strategies (right).

PROVIDE

Provide the word if your child is unable to read the word after two tries.

PRAISE

Always praise your child for realizing something was not right, attempting to self-correct, substituting a word that makes sense, re-reading and self-correcting after being prompted.

Stuck-on-a-Word strategies can help your child when they come to unfamiliar words in their reading:

Say the beginning sound and BLEND the sounds to the end of the word. e.g. s-e-t = set

Does it make sense? Think about the topic to help you figure out the word.

Look at the pictures to get an idea of what is happening in the story and go back and read again.

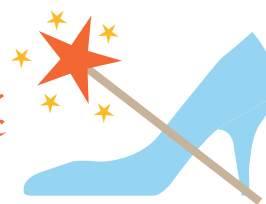
Skip the hard word and read to the end of the sentence.

Does it look right? Say the beginning sound and slide your finger across the letters of the word.

Look for the little word inside the big word.

Does that sound right? Sound out the word in CHUNKS. e.g. ch-at

Where there is goodness,
there is magic



Why?



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Give children 'wait time' so positive things can happen

When talking with children and reading aloud together, research shows that giving 3 to 10 seconds 'wait time' after a question has positive outcomes:

- The child is likely to engage more in the conversation
 - The length of their responses increases
- The number of *I don't know* answers decreases

Sometimes it takes a conscious effort to wait and count quietly in one's head to allow for wait time.

Source: Calgary Reads

How to choose a book (tips to help your child)

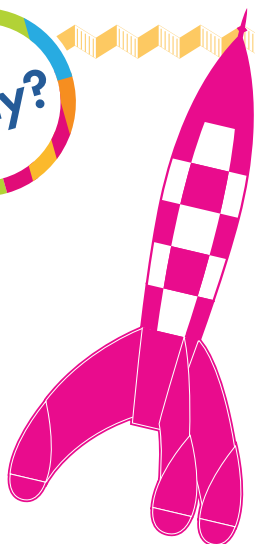
- 1** Think about...
 - What types of books do you like?
 - Do you have a favourite author?
 - What are your interests?
- 2** Ask someone to recommend a book
- 3** Look inside a book you think you might like and try to read a bit of it
- 4** Once you find one you like... enjoy!



“ Be like Curious George, start with a question and look under the yellow hat to find what’s there. ”

James Collins

Why?



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Top 5 reasons to let kids choose their own books

When you let children choose what they read they will read for pleasure, and will:

- 5** Take risks and explore new genres
- 4** Read more
- 3** Become better writers
- 2** Enjoy reading and see it's not a chore
- 1** Become empowered

Dads have a role too!

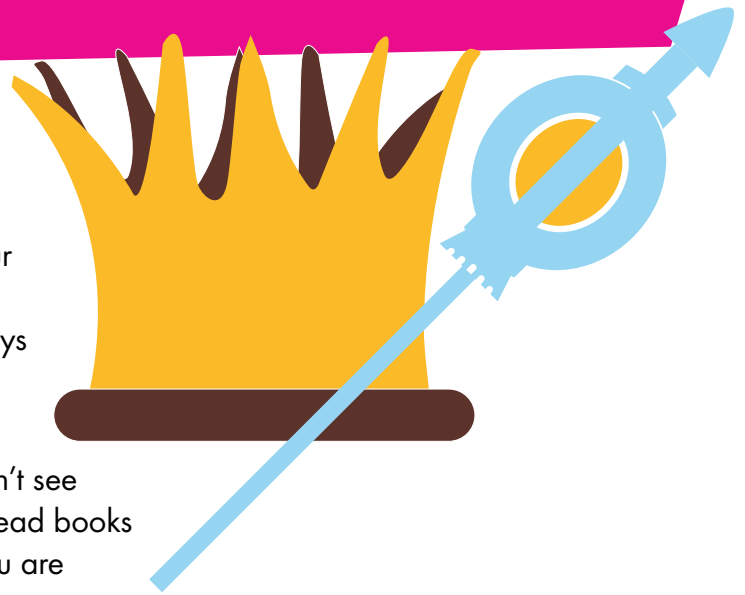
Dads and other male caregivers play a critical role in their children's literacy development.

Read anything with your child that might interest you both: Your child will respond to your enthusiasm. Perhaps read about famous people, animals or how things work. Many dads and boys prefer non-fiction (books about real stuff, interesting facts and 'how-to').

Read together even if you are apart: If you don't see your child each day, arrange a regular time to read books over the phone, or create your own podcast! You are modeling that reading is fun and valued.

Even if you're not a reader yourself, your participation in literacy activities at home can have a profound impact on your child's academic achievement.

- Tell stories about when you were young
- Ask your child about their day. Conversation helps children learn new words and create a narrative – this links to better reading skills
- Play games together that use letters, words or problem solving



"When I say to a parent, 'read to a child', I don't want it to sound like medicine. I want it to sound like chocolate."

Mem Fox

Why?

Increasingly involved dads are good news for children, studies suggest

For example, dads who nurture and play with their babies have kids who grow up to have higher IQs. These benefits extend into the teen years, too, and lead to higher scores in school. Other studies of fatherhood suggest that stepdads, adoptive fathers and other father figures can provide the same kinds of benefits for kids as biological dads.

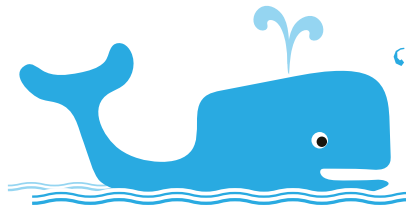
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How much screen time is appropriate for your child?

The Canadian Paediatric Society (CPS) released new guidelines in June 2017. The group says parents and caregivers of children aged five and younger should not only minimize screen time (smart phones, TV, tablet, video game, computer, or e-reader) at home but use it mindfully themselves.

- No screen time for children under two; there are no documented benefits
- For children three to five years of age, limit screen time to less than one hour per day
- Avoid screens at least one hour before bed
- The CPS does acknowledge that when busy parents need a break, there's room for preschoolers to watch 20 minutes of high-quality educational programs pre-screened by a parent



“Don't worry about the bits you can't understand. Sit back and allow the words to wash around you, like music.”

Mrs Phelps (Matilda by Roald Dahl)

Why?



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No known research

Whether early exposure to screen media changes the developing brain is not known and published research on how (and how much) children younger than 5 years of age actually learn from screens remains limited.

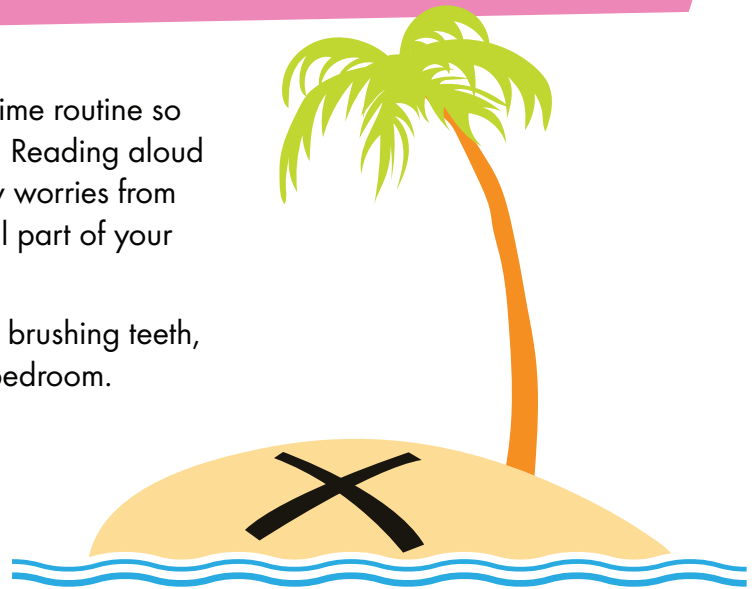
By contrast, children learn intensely through face-to-face interaction with parents and caregivers. Early learning is easier, more enriching and developmentally more efficient when experienced live, interactively, in real time and space, and with real people.

Source: Canadian Paediatric Society

Rest and reading rituals

Your child needs enough rest and a good bedtime routine so they can keep growing and learning each day. Reading aloud with them can help them de-compress from any worries from the day and reading rituals can be a wonderful part of your child's bedtime routine!

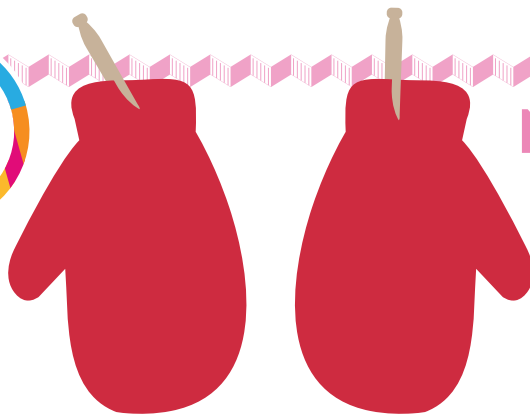
- **Have a bedtime plan:** It might include: bath, brushing teeth, talking and reading together in your child's bedroom.
- **Unplug and unwind:** Your child needs to unwind and slow down an hour before bedtime. No caffeine and no screens.
- **Set the mood:** Aim for soft lighting and low sounds. Read in your child's room so you are already quiet together in the sleeping environment.



"There is no frigate like a book,
to take us lands away."

Emily Dickinson

Why?



Night-time reading rituals

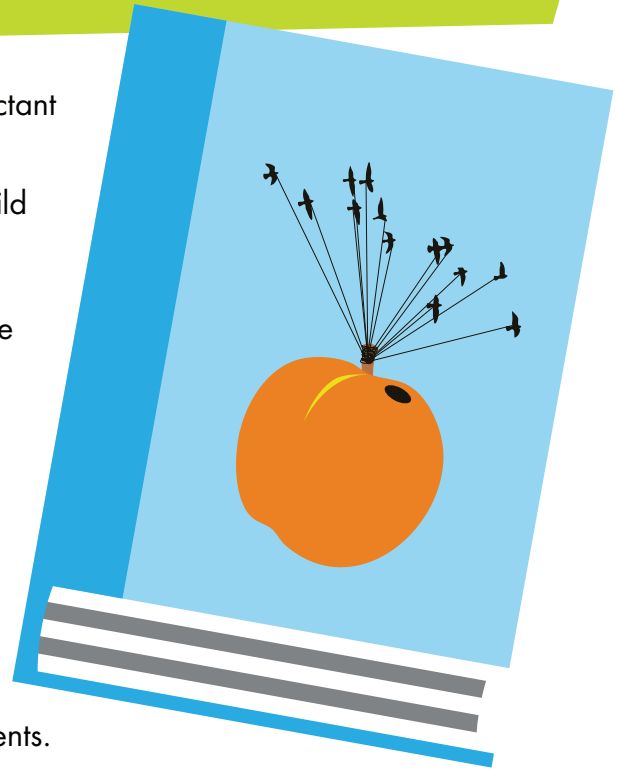
Many researchers believe that during this night-time ritual, you're actually boosting your child's brain development. These gains range from improved logic skills to lower stress levels.

But perhaps the most profound benefit discovered in recent years is the way bedtime stories can rewire children's brains to quicken their mastery of language.

Helping reluctant readers

There are four general reasons why children may be reluctant readers and, fortunately, many ways to help.

- **Too boring:** The reading level may be too hard or your child hasn't found the right book or subject that gets him hooked. Find out what your child is passionate about (dinosaurs, space ships, ponies or princesses) and share books, magazines and websites on the topic together.
- **Too blurry:** Vision, learning difficulties, and the ability (or inability) to pay attention all powerfully affect learning. Have appropriate health check-ups and consider products (reading trackers, coloured overlays etc.) and other resources that might help.
- **Too tricky:** Sometimes we forget that reading is one of the hardest things our child will learn to do. Seek help from their teacher and/or explore simple assessments.
- **Too much sitting:** Sitting still doesn't appeal to many children. Be creative about when reading can occur; audio books can be used while on the move and you can read to your child during meals.



"If one cannot enjoy reading a book over and over again, there is no use in reading it at all."

Oscar Wilde

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Get engaged in reading

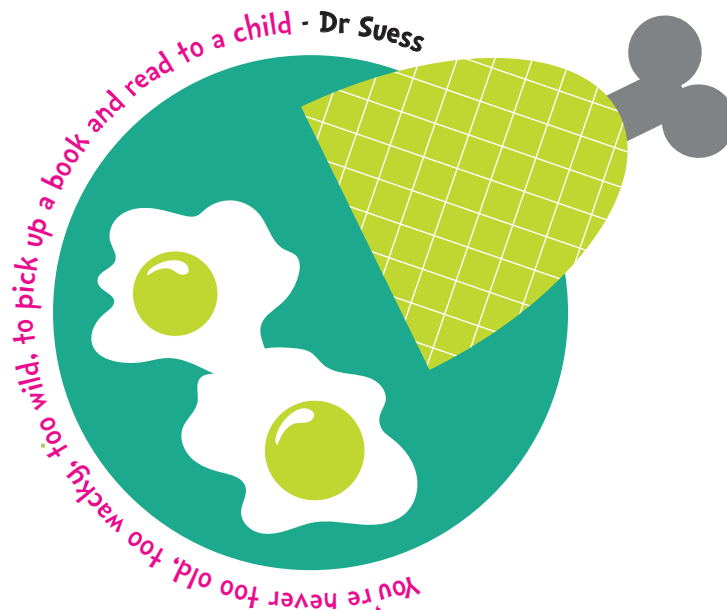
Getting a child engaged in reading is worth all of the effort you may have to put in and one of the best ways to instill a love of reading is to read aloud to him or her from a very young age. Studies show a correlation between the amount of reading for pleasure a child does and their grades at school. Reading helps children build their vocabulary and is at once an essential skill for success in an academic setting and a great aid for personal development. Readers experience life through the eyes of different narrators, which helps them develop empathy and learn more about the world.

Source: www.readandspell.com

Last thoughts

Keep reading aloud to your child even after they can read independently. Opportunities to hear stories above a child's reading level stretches their imagination, expands their vocabulary and comprehension and nurtures a love of reading. Support your child as they transition from learning to read, to reading to learn.

Happy reading!



In addition to sources noted, we acknowledge our local partners, including:
Alberta Family Wellness Initiative and First 2000 Days Network.