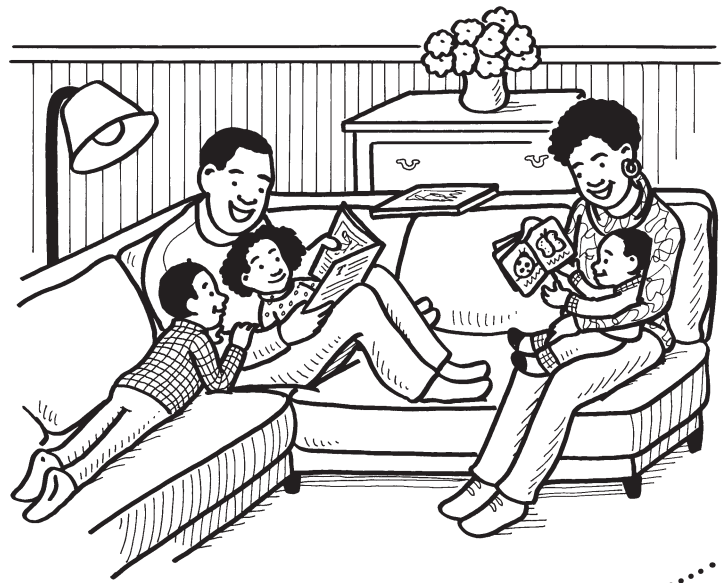


THE GIFT OF READING ALOUD

In 20 magical minutes a day, you can connect with your youngster, improve her reading skills, and foster a love of books—just by reading aloud. These ideas to use before, during, and after reading will make the experience full of learning and enjoyable for the whole family.



BEFORE

Set the stage for successful read-alouds with these tips.

CHOOSE BOOKS



Visit the library regularly with your child to stock up on all kinds of books, including fiction, nonfiction, and poetry. She may pick the same familiar stories over and over, which is great—they're comforting to her, and repeated readings promote word recognition and deeper comprehension. Introduce new

titles, too. Perhaps she'd like a favorite book from when you were little. Or ask the librarian for recommendations for kids your youngster's age.

PICK A GOOD TIME

Reading aloud is more pleasant and productive if it's not rushed or interrupted. Set aside time each day when you and your child can focus solely on reading, maybe after dinner or at bedtime. Turn off the TV, and put away cell phones and other devices. He won't get distracted and lose track of the book, and you'll reinforce the idea that sharing a story with him is the most important thing going on at that moment.

DO A PREVIEW

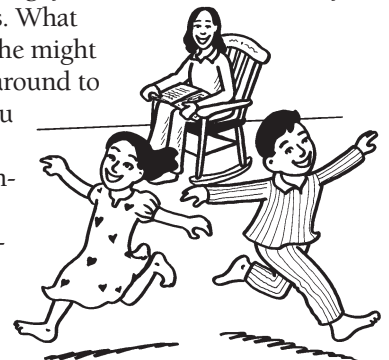
Let your youngster flip through the pages before you read a book aloud. Encourage her to talk about what she sees in the pictures. Who is the main character? Where does the story take place? (She'll want to be careful not to find out the ending by looking at the last page.) If it's nonfiction, what does your child already know about the topic? Having an idea of what to expect prepares her to understand the book. *Idea:* If you're going to read a storybook, suggest that she pick a voice for you to use for each character.

DURING

Use read-alouds to build skills your youngster needs for independent reading. Here's how.

ACT OUT NEW VOCABULARY

Invite your child to act out unfamiliar words when you read to him. That will help the words stick in his mind. For example, if you're reading about a baby giraffe with *unsteady* legs and he asks what *unsteady* means, you might say, "*Unsteady* means wobbly or shaky. Show me how you stand on *wobbly* legs." If a bird in a story is *gliding*, you could tell him, "It's flying without flapping its wings. What would that look like?" Then, he might stretch his arms out and run around to pretend he's gliding. *Tip:* If you come across a word you don't know, look it up in the dictionary together. Your youngster will see that vocabulary building is a lifelong adventure.



EXPLORE THE PICTURES

While you read, hold the book so your child can see both the words and the pictures. Looking at the illustrations as he listens helps him to understand and enjoy the story. Let him set the pace—he may want to examine an illustration closely or have you go back to a previous one to clear up confusion.



illustration and think of a rhyming word that makes sense in the sentence (*lines*). She'll work on using context clues and pictures to make her prediction—important strategies for when she's reading to herself and gets stuck on a word.

SHARE THE FUN

Books that follow a predictable pattern or ones with lines that repeat are perfect for shared reading. Put your youngster in charge of reading the refrain. Each time you come to "I'll huff, and I'll puff, and I'll blow your house down," for example, pause to let him take over. Reading familiar lines aloud lets him practice sounding smooth and using good expression.

PREDICT THE RHYME

Read a rhyming book to your youngster. Cover up the second rhyming word in a pair, and see if she can figure it out. *Example:* "In an old house in Paris that was covered in *vines*, lived twelve little girls in two straight ____." Your child could look at the

AFTER

Read-aloud time doesn't have to end when you close the book. Keep the fun going with comprehension-boosting activities like these.

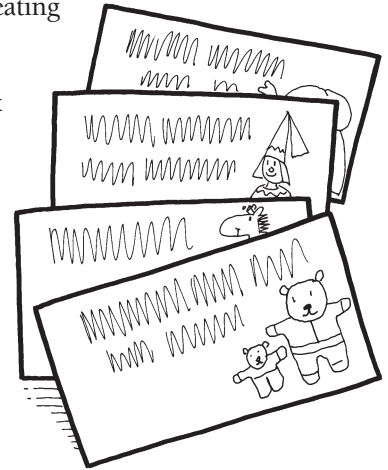
RETELL THE STORY

Let your youngster use "stepping-stones" to retell the story. She can label three paper plates "Beginning," "Middle," and "End." On each one, encourage her to draw what happened in that part of the story. She might draw the gingerbread man jumping from the oven, running from the people and animals, and outsmarting a fox. Then, have her lay her stepping-stones in order on the floor and step on each one as she retells the story.



MAKE TRADING CARDS

Your child can keep track of the books you read aloud by creating a trading card for each one. Suggest that he write the title and author on an index card and draw a picture of the main character (for fiction) or the book's topic (for nonfiction). On the back of the card, he could list a few words to remind himself of what the book was about. After reading one about weather, for instance, maybe he'll write *science*, *nature*, and *storms*. *Idea:* Encourage him to sort the cards into categories, such as animal stories and biographies, and keep each group in a separate labeled zipper bag.



BUILD KNOWLEDGE

Books can open doors to new experiences for your youngster. If you read her a story about kids running a lemonade stand, she might enjoy setting up a stand of her own. Or you could follow up on a book set in pioneer times by visiting a history museum. She'll make connections between books and real life, and she'll gain background knowledge she can draw on in the future.