

Read-alouds

Foundations of Reading

To learn to read well, children need to know how to recognize and pronounce words (**decoding**), what words mean (**vocabulary**) and how to understand the meaning of a group of words or connected text (**comprehension**). To build these foundations of reading, teachers use a balanced approach and focus on the goal of reading for meaning. Parents play a vital role in supporting this work at home.

Why read aloud to your child?

Reading aloud is important because it:

- exposes younger children to the more formal and descriptive language of books;
- helps all children develop and improve literacy skills—reading, writing, speaking and listening;
- encourages children to use their imagination as they visualize people, places, times and events outside of their daily experience;
- develops vocabulary and background knowledge and expands children’s understanding of the world and their place in it;
- supports the development of thinking skills as children ask questions and talk about what is being read;
- models fluent reading for children;
- presents an opportunity for children to see books as a source of a pleasant, valuable and exciting experience; and
- motivates children to want to read on their own.

Read-aloud Tips for Young Children

- Begin reading aloud to children early.
- With very young children, “read” family photo albums together.
- Use simple, bold, colourful picture books.
- Begin with picture books, then move to story books and novels.
- Only read for as long as your child can pay attention. Gradually increase the time.
- Use the illustrations to encourage prediction and interpretation.
- Read and reread the same books when your child asks you to do so. You might get tired of the same story, but your child doesn’t!
- Celebrate with your child if they memorize the books and can “read” them along with you.

Finding Books for Beginning Readers

- Choose books that can be read in one sitting (about 15 minutes).
- Read different kinds of books: poetry, fairy tales, real-world tales and informational stories.
- Read a book without words. Talk about the pictures.
- Choose books that relate to your child’s personal interests and build their knowledge.
- Look for books that are multicultural or feature human differences.

Read-aloud Tips for Older Children

- Choose a book slightly above your child's reading level that they'll enjoy. Select a book with a strong character, one that you might use different voices and actions for. Practice the book before sharing it.
- Before reading, look at the cover and title page with your child. Talk about the author and illustrator. Ask questions about the book topic, so your child can begin to predict what the story might be about.
- Read slowly to enable your child to follow what you are reading. Encourage questions and share thoughts about the story.
- After you finish reading, ask for your child's reactions. Share yours. You might ask your child to talk about their favourite parts or you might retell the story together.
- Occasionally, you might extend the story when your child's interest is high. You could orally create a sequel with your child or ask them to suggest an alternate ending. You might make stick puppets or drawings together to enhance the retelling of the story.

Read-aloud Tips for All Children

- Establish daily routine story times.
- When reading aloud, use expression, changing your tone of voice and adjusting pace, so that your child can build a mental picture.
- For a change of pace, offer your child audio books and listen to them together while in the car. Check the public library for titles.
- Talk about what you are reading during and after a read-aloud session.
- Help your child relate books to their own experiences.
- If your child is active, allow them to draw as they listen.
- Encourage your child to choose books. Take turns choosing the book to read.
- Read just for enjoyment. Don't make reading into an exercise. Have fun reading with your child!

Read-aloud Resources

Reading Magic: Why Reading Aloud to Our Children Will Change Their Lives Forever by Mem Fox
Available at the Edmonton Public Library (www.epl.ca)

Internet Resources

AMERICAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION ONLINE RESOURCES FOR PARENTS AND CHILDREN

This website provides an excellent list of resources for children of all ages.

www.ala.org/Template.cfm?Section=litoolkit&Template=/ContentManagement/ContentDisplay.cfm&ContentID=50662

THE CHILDREN'S LITERATURE WEB GUIDE—RESOURCES FOR PARENTS

This site contains many useful links for parents to use to support their children's literacy.

<http://people.ucalgary.ca/~dkbrown/>

2. Reading With a Purpose

The reasons **why** we read are as varied as the materials we read. When a student's assigned material to be read, it's important for them to focus on the reason for reading. Is it:

- To find out facts and opinions?
- For enjoyment?
- To learn how to make or do something?
- To solve a problem?
- To learn new ideas or information?

If your teen cannot narrow their focus, they may not understand any of the material they have to read. Once the purpose has been decided, a student needs to ask themselves questions so that, as they read, they'll look for specific information.

Informational and Narrative Reading

Students will read materials that fit into two main categories: **informational** and **narrative**.

Informational reading includes everything from textbooks and magazines to recipes and instructional manuals. **Narrative reading** includes fiction in all its forms, as well as poetry.

Reading Strategies

Here are some strategies you can work through with your teen to help them get the most out of whichever type of text they read.

INFORMATIONAL

1. Understand the purpose for reading.
2. Identify what is to be read (such as a textbook).
3. Preview and skim the material:
 - How is the material organized?
 - Do you have any previous knowledge about the topic?
 - What do you expect to learn?
 - Can you organize the material visually (a graph, chart, diagram)?
4. Read the material, changing reading rate as necessary.
5. Review and skim:
 - Have you missed anything?
 - Can you restate the main points in your own words?
6. Deal with unfamiliar words:
 - Use context clues.
 - Examine familiar word parts (prefixes, roots).
 - Look up the word in the dictionary.
 - Jot the word down and look it up later.
 - Ask someone what it means.

NARRATIVE

1. Understand the purpose for reading.
2. Identify what is to be read (such as a story).
3. What is the setting?
4. Who are the main characters and what are they like?
5. What is the main character's goal?
6. What obstacles stand in his or her way?
7. What will the outcome be and how will it come about?
8. What messages about life might the author be trying to communicate?
9. What mental images are you getting of the characters and events?

Something else to keep in mind... Reading for *Fact and Opinion*

A critical reader doesn't accept information blindly. They need to be able to separate facts from opinions.

- A **fact** is a statement that's known to be true and that can be **checked or proven**. We find facts in math and science content and also in social studies, when we are reading about things that have actually happened, or that can be considered to be true.
- An **opinion** is someone's belief or feeling about something, based on what **seems to be true or valid**. An opinion, though often supported by facts and reasons, cannot be proven.

When reading, it's important to identify what is fact and what is opinion, and then look for conclusions the author may have drawn. A conclusion based on fact is always stronger than one based on opinion.

Sometimes, authors do not draw conclusions about what they write, so the reader must do it. Reading and thinking about facts and other people's opinions will help your teen learn to draw their own conclusions.

Other reading strategies your teen can try:

SELF-TALK - ASKING THE BIG QUESTIONS UP FRONT

1. What is the author's purpose?
2. Is this selection fiction or non-fiction?
3. How is the material organized?
4. How will I deal with unfamiliar words, expressions or terms?
5. What am I expected to find out?
6. Am I looking for facts, opinions, general information, reasons or examples?

Tip: Encourage your teen to write these six questions or others on sticky notes. They can make more than one sticky for each if that's helpful. As they read, they can stick the stickies beside passages that answer one or more of the questions.