



Teach reading effectively in every classroom, every day

## Reading with children

Reading with children is one of the most enjoyable things a parent, grandparent or carer can do, and as a bonus it helps their language development.

While it is not the case that children learn to read simply by being read to, shared reading is one of the essential literacy experiences that contribute to children becoming good and willing readers. Books contain words, grammar and language structures that are different to conversational language.

*"I think if parents realised that reading never just happens, that reading is the tip of an iceberg that begins with children's first language acts and involves vocabulary growth, feeling at home in the world of letters. If I could get across to parents that one of the best things they could do is first read to their child, maybe 5 minutes, maybe 10 minutes - but every day - and to give an example of reading as part of our lives."*

Dr Maryanne Wolf, Director of the Centre for Reading and Language and Associate Professor of Child Development, Tufts University

Shared reading activities are largely about nurturing a love of reading and books, but there are some things that will make the experience especially beneficial for children.

Shared reading is important for children of all ages. It needn't stop when they are able to read independently.

One of the keys is to read **with** your child, rather than **to** your child.

Involve children in the reading experience by letting them choose books, discussing the story and the characters, talking about the sounds and meanings of the words, and talking about the pictures.

**Simple tips for shared reading that will enhance children's literacy development:**

- Make time to read together every day – the longer the better, but even 15 minutes is better than not at all.
- Read together in a place without distractions like television or computers.
- If it is a new book, look through it together first and discuss what it might be about.

**With younger children:**

- Explain how books 'work'. Explain that all books have a title and an author, how to hold a book, that we turn the pages from the front to the back, and we read the words from left to right down the page. This seems obvious to us, but not to children!
- Point out letters in words and talk about their sounds. Start with the first initials of the child's names and their family's names.
- Include books with rhyme or alliteration to help development phonemic awareness.
- Include books with an interesting variety of words to develop vocabulary. Talk about the meaning of new or unfamiliar words and try to use those words in conversation over the next few days.
- Include classic fables and fairytales from a variety of cultures to develop children's cultural literacy.

**With older children:**

- Choose books for shared reading that are more challenging than children are capable of reading on their own, which will expose them to words, ideas, themes, and concepts that will contribute to their vocabulary, and general knowledge.
- Alternate books by contemporary authors with books by classic authors like Rudyard Kipling, CS Lewis, and Robert Louis Stevenson. This will open up new worlds to children and extend their cultural literacy.
- Encourage children to be more adventurous in their own book choices, especially at the library.
- Don't insist on finishing a book if they are not enjoying it after the first few chapters. Put it aside and maybe come back to it another time.

For information on how to find the right books for your child, visit [www.fivefromfive.org.au](http://www.fivefromfive.org.au)