



Issue Two

Supporting Early Learners

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Partners in Learning

Dear Parents,

Children have the best possible chance to reach their full potential when educators and parents work as partners to provide supportive learning environments. These newsletters have been written by Bev DeMonyé and Gloria Gustafson for parents wanting to help their children at home. You are welcome to email us at learningtoread@telus.net or visit our website www.readwritewithkids.com to view other resources.

Reading With Children As They Learn To Read

When children start learning to read, they benefit from reading out loud to parents. Ten to twenty minutes a day provides amazing results when help and support is one-on-one! This can:

- promote a sense of partnership between you and your child
- provide the necessary practice for your child to develop confidence and move forward in reading
- stretch your child's reading skills
- motivate your child to take on new reading challenges
- inspire a life-long love for reading



Reading to Children From the Beginning

Sharing the joy of reading on a daily basis helps children develop a love for books, reading and learning. Reading to babies and toddlers is one of the best ways to introduce them to the world of books. Children discover that reading is an enjoyable learning experience and become readers for life!

Reading out loud to children introduces new words, ideas and information. Talking with children before, during and after reading helps develop listening and speaking skills. This type of talking also improves depth of understanding.

Reading out loud provides a natural way for children to learn about:

- holding and caring for books
- covers, titles, authors and illustrators
- how pictures and words tell a story or provide information
- letters, words and sentences
- where to start reading: reading left to right and from top to bottom
- rhyme and the flow of language in books
- the many types of books such as fiction, story, information and poetry books



Tips for Reading to Children

- Read daily to your child when you have time to enjoy it.
- Be playful, enthusiastic and expressive as you read books you and your child are interested in.
- Children love to have favourite stories read over and over again. When children no longer have to concentrate on the plot, they naturally focus on the flow of language and start memorizing some words and phrases which is a beginning step in learning to read.
- Reading titles and looking at pictures before you read helps to captivate your child's interest and develop predicting skills.
- Encourage your child to retell the story using the pictures as prompts.
- When reading a fact book ask your child what was the most interesting thing they learned.
- Demonstrate a sense of curiosity as you are reading using prompts such as: *I wonder why . . . Isn't this interesting . . . This makes me think about . . . or Wow . . .*
- Share ideas, feelings and thoughts to help your child make connections between their own life experiences and what you are reading.
- Encourage your child to visualize and act out parts of the story to help the stories come alive.
- Use your finger to track words as you read. This reinforces reading left to right, top to bottom and helps develop the idea of matching the spoken word to the printed word. Sometimes children want to take responsibility and do the finger tracking themselves. Using bookmarks and pointers vary the tracking process.
- Reading material can be at various levels of difficulty: from very easy picture books to books with a lot of print. It is amazing how much children can enjoy and understand what they hear long before they read.

Tips for Supporting Children When They Read Out Loud to You

- Be encouraging, supportive and celebrate your child's reading successes.
- Short, enjoyable reading sessions are far better than overdoing it and risking a struggle or creating a negative experience.
- Some children like to read to themselves or to a favourite stuffy or toy before reading out loud to a parent. This helps to relieve the pressure of a performance situation.
- Readers use a combination of phonics or sounding out, clues from pictures and other words they have already read. They also use their own background knowledge to figure out words they don't know. You can support your child by making the following suggestions:
 - *look at the pictures and make a good guess at the word*
 - *try sounding out the word*
 - *look at word parts*
 - *use the first letter as a clue*
 - *read the sentence again and think about a word that would make sense*
- If your child is stuck on a word allow wait time. Don't be too quick to help! Children need time to think through options. It is okay to remind them to use one of the above suggestions or simply tell them the word to avoid unpleasant frustration.
- Point out and show how commas, periods, question marks and exclamation marks help us read with expression and fluency.
- If your child starts to struggle, try taking turns reading line by line or page by page. Another option is to try unison reading or reading out loud together. It may be that this book is better to be enjoyed as a read aloud book.

Choosing Books

Help your child choose reading material that is not too difficult. Just like Goldilocks and the Three Bears, the reading material should be just right: ***not too easy, not too hard, but just right***. Use the following three steps to help your child decide on a ***just right*** book.

Step One: Parent estimates or counts off about 100 words.

Step Two: Your child starts reading and every time they are stuck on a word have them put up a finger. If they go beyond five fingers then the text is too difficult. Assure your child that it won't be long before this book will be ***just right***.

Step Three: Encourage your child to find something easier and follow step one and two again.

Don't forget children's librarians are happy to help you and your child find ***just right*** books.