

Tips to Support Shared Reading

Shared reading occurs when a child and family member or caregiver look at or read a book together. However, reading a book together is more than listening or reading to one another. When you have a shared reading experience, you are helping a child learn to read by having conversations about the story. It also helps to talk about what you are reading in ways that encourage your child to respond (Ezell & Justice, 2005).

What does shared reading look like?

Shared reading supports language and reading development for your child in three ways:

- Your child benefits by enjoying the words and pictures
- Your child links what’s happening in the pictures to what is happening in the story
- Your child adds this experience to the personal knowledge they already have

For children who have challenges with reading, the same approach can be used, but families may need to add more steps to the experience. You may also use technology to encourage your child to respond to and interact with what he or she sees on the page. Together, you can create a shared experience around a book you both want to read.

Strategies you can try

Educators use strategies such as commenting and questioning while reading to encourage responses from students. You can use similar strategies at home to help build reading skills for your child.

Making comments

Start the shared reading experience with a comment. Say something about the cover of the book and what you think the story might be about: “I see a lot of animals on the cover. I think this book is going to be about animals.” As you page through the book, share what you are thinking out loud so your child can learn from your model.

Use questions

Ask questions that give your child a chance to become a part of the reading experience. This is where you may need to use technology to give them a voice so that they can respond. Avoid questions that can be answered with a simple “yes” or “no.” For example, try, “What do you think is going to happen next?”

Make connections

Help your child make connections to what you are reading with his or her own experiences. For example, as you are reading the book about animals you could say, “That is a funny gorilla. Do you remember when we saw a gorilla like this at the zoo?”

Pause and wait

As you are reading make sure you give your child enough time to make his or her own comments and answer your questions. Giving children extra time ensures that they have to think about what they are reading and find the words to answer the questions.

Benefits of shared reading

Shared reading has many benefits for you and your child:

- Provides shared time to communicate between you and your child
- Encourages your child who may not like reading
- Helps you better understand the way your child communicates

For children who use an alternative communication system, a shared reading experience gives you the opportunity to help your child. You can show your child how to operate a communication system by using the symbols in his or her device. For example, you can select the symbol for “that’s funny” at a humorous point in the book.

Finding books that motivate teens and young adults who struggle with reading

One of the challenges families face when looking for shared reading material for older learners is finding books that are easy and interesting to read. When searching for reading material, look for books with these characteristics:

- It can be read and reread in one sitting
- It uses language that is a good match for your child’s reading level
- It includes subjects your child likes or knows

The following resources are helpful for these types of readers:

Tar Heel Reader — tarheelreader.org

Tar Heel Reader is a free, accessible reading resource specifically designed for the older learner. The authors are parents and teachers who write on topics for a wide range of ages. Many of these online books include topics that teen and young adult audiences often prefer, such as sports and movies. Books can be speech enabled and accessed using multiple interfaces. Setting up a free account also allows the user to write and print their own stories.

Reading Rockets — <https://www.readingrockets.org/article/highlow-books-children>

Reading Rockets has a wide variety of reading resources that families can use with their children. This webpage describes how to use “high-low books” which feature high interest topics written at lower reading levels. High-low books can help build reading fluency, increase vocabulary, and spark a new interest in reading. Different types of these books are described (such as graphic novels, non-fiction, chapter books) and book lists are provided for each.

ThoughtCo — <https://www.thoughtco.com/books-for-reluctant-readers-627603>

This webpage describes 10 websites that feature lists of high-low books for a variety of reluctant readers.

Picture Books for Older Readers

Choose picture books that draw the child or student’s attention. Humorous, dramatic, hip, relatable, and unusual stories tend to appeal to older readers. Picture books can be a window into exploring and discussing more complex themes or sensitive topics. The Children’s Library Lady website is written primarily for parents - <https://childrenslibrarylady.com/using-picture-books-with-older-children>. This webpage outlines the benefits of using picture books with older students or those who are English language learners. Includes multiple lists of recommended books, many with multicultural themes and characters.

PACER’s Simon Technology Center Lending Library—PACER.org/STC/library

Families can borrow assistive technology items that support reading. Visit the webpage to learn more about the lending program. Click on the *View Our Online Catalog* button to browse items.