



Tips to Support Shared Reading

Shared Reading occurs when a child and a parent look at or read a book together. However, reading a book together is much more than listening to your son or daughter read to you, or reading to your child. When you have a shared reading experience, you are helping your 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 parents 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 adults 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 that 1) can be read and reread in one sitting, 2) use language that is a good match for your child’s reading level, and 3) include 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 web resource specifically designed for the older learner. The authors are parents and teachers from around the world who write on topics for a wide range of ages. There are many books that teen and young adult audiences often prefer, such as sports and movies. Once you get to the website, you can browse books by using a search feature. Favorite books can be downloaded to make printed copies.

If you don’t find a book the child is interested in, you can sign up for a free account and write a story that you know he or she will like. Keep your sentence structure simple and at the child’s reading level. Tips for writing books are provided.

Route 66 — <http://www.route66literacy.org>

Route 66 is a subscription-based online educational literacy program. It contains helpful activities for writing, word study, and reading. Go to the reading section to find a relevant topic of interest to your child, and use the tutor cues to help guide the shared reading experience. A free trial is available.

Picture Books for Older Readers

Choose picture books that draw the child’s attention. Humorous, dramatic, and unusual stories tend to appeal to older readers. Books such as “No, David!” by David Shannon, “Tough Boris” by Mem Fox, and “The Book of Bad Ideas” by Laura Huliska-Beith, are good examples. These books and others can be found on the ‘Picture Books for Older Readers’ list compiled by Dr. Karen Erickson from The Center on Literacy and Disability Studies at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill. To see the list, visit this website: mbaea.org/documents/filelibrary/pdf/assistive_technology/dr_ericksons_class/Picture_Books.pdf

If you would like more information on shared reading and ways to use technology to encourage more engaged reading, go to PACER’s Simon Technology Center’s website at PACER.org/STC/library.