

monthly message:



Making the most of story time

In the first five years of life, 90% of the brain is formed. It is shaped mostly by experiences children have with the adults in their lives beginning at birth. Children learn about the world around them by watching, touching, listening, and tasting. Reading with your child stimulates these senses and builds relationships while promoting learning. Children enjoy looking at pictures, hearing rhyming patterns as you read, practicing how to turn pages, and even chewing on books! Reading is a great sensory experience that lights up the brain.

We know that reading to children is important but *how* we read to them is just as important. Reading to children exposes them to language at an early age which helps them become good readers and better communicators. Traditional reading involves an adult reading out loud while a child listens to the story. Although this interaction is good, there is a better way to read to your child that encourages more learning. Dialogic reading is a style of reading that lets children become active participants in the reading experience. By asking questions, children have the chance to process what they heard and saw as you read together. Studies show that children who have been read to using this method do better on language development tests than children who are read to traditionally, they also know more words and speak in longer sentences.

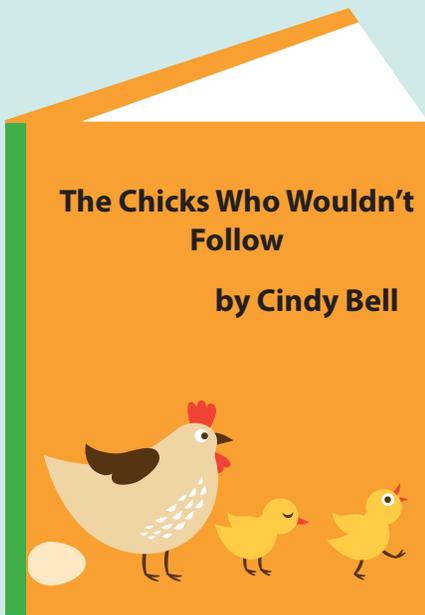
Dialogic reading helps children pay attention to details of the story that are easy to miss when they are simply listening or reading by themselves. When you ask questions, you get to be in the listener role. This lets you learn what your child is able to understand. This style of reading is not about getting the right answers or turning story time into a quiz. It's meant to be fun! This technique allows your child to be more engaged in reading, think creatively and absorb more information. This technique works well with familiar books you have already read to your child. For example, if you were reading a book to your child about farmer Ted, you could ask your child about the animals in the book. Dialogic reading isn't about reading books in the traditional way. You may find that you actually don't "read" the book at all. Instead, you ask questions and engage the child in looking at the pictures together.



ASK: What animal on the page is pink?

Watch a video by Children, Inc. on learning in the early years and dialogic reading.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vlpHH9GytNc>





ASK: What do you think this book is about?

Don't Skip the Cover!
Remember to read the title of the book and the author to your child. Before beginning the story, you can ask your child to guess what he or she thinks the story will be about.

A good time to introduce dialogic reading is at 2 years of age. It's as easy as asking the basic "wh" questions: who, what, where and when. Open-ended questions are also great because they allow your child to think creatively. For example, you can pause before a major part of the story and ask "What do you think will happen next?" It may take some getting used to both for you and your child to pause and talk while reading but it will become more natural the more you do it. Try using the memory aid below to help you practice dialogic reading. You can use the same technique when watching videos too by pausing the video to ask a question!

- P**rompt your child to speak by asking a question
- E**valuate your child's response for accuracy
- E**xpand your child's response by rephrasing and adding information to it
- R**epeat what your child said

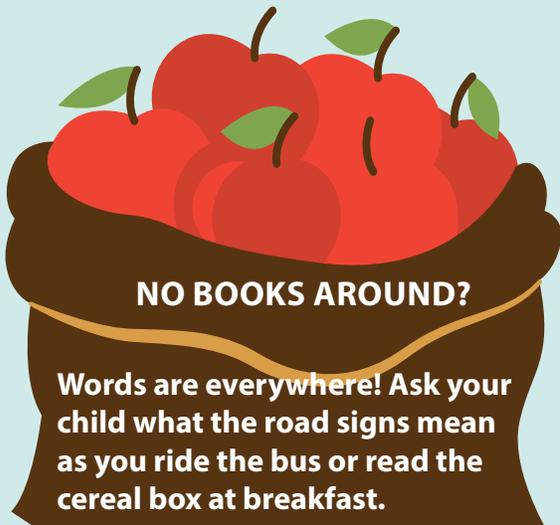
DIALOGIC READING IN ACTION

Here is how an adult can use dialogic reading when reading a story about farm animals:

Adult: "What is this?" (the prompt) while pointing to a picture of a cow.

Child: "Cow"

Adult: "That's right (the evaluation), it's a brown cow (the expansion). Can you say moo like a cow?" (the repetition).



NO BOOKS AROUND?

Words are everywhere! Ask your child what the road signs mean as you ride the bus or read the cereal box at breakfast.



-  **Read together daily.** Routines like bath time and bedtime are great reading opportunities.
-  **Let your child choose a book for you to read.**
-  **Re-read books.** Repetition helps strengthen your child's familiarity with words and memory. Plus you can ask different questions every time.
-  **Snuggle up.** Your child loves being close to you and it helps connect reading as an act of love.