



Read to Me Project Training Guide
**9 Best Ways to Read
to Young Children**



Read to Me
PROJECT

SIBLINGS READING SUCCEEDING

Every child entering kindergarten prepared to succeed.

Welcome Mentors!

We are happy to provide you with this training guide for your role as a youth mentor. It is based on the Read to Me Project's work to provide every child with early literacy experiences that are the foundation for success in school and a lifetime of greater opportunity.

At the Read to Me Project, we teach older children to read effectively to younger children using our “9 Best Ways to Read to Young Children”, to spark and grow the young ones’ brains so they can succeed in school and in life. We’ve proven that this practice also improves the reading and comprehension skills of the ones doing the reading, while building the social and emotional skills of both children.

Reading to young children is one of the most important and valuable things we can do for children we care about. Just as we use food to feed and nourish their little bodies, we use books to feed and grow their little brains and hearts. Sitting comfortably with a child and happily sharing a book gives that child the quiet gifts of safety, time, and attention. Reading aloud is an act of caring that opens a child’s mind to the wonders in the story and in its pictures. When we read and talk about stories and pictures with children, we bring them ideas, concepts, and words they need so they can think and talk about their world.

Every new word we give to a child is a gift. By giving children the rich language we use to describe the things we can see as well as the things we can’t, like our feelings and emotions, we empower them to think, to name what they see and feel, to be curious, to be confident about their ability to learn, to imagine, to invent. In the gentle, safe comfort of a shared book, children can thrive in the magic of a good story, free to experience the lives of characters in places near and far. And as we help them venture into new worlds through books, we spark children’s curiosity, wonder, amazement.

The awe, the excitement about discovery and learning we give children by reading engagingly and lovingly to them, will help them to lift themselves over the obstacles they encounter on the way to becoming successful adults.

Happy reading!

Thank you for caring and volunteering to read to a younger child! Reading to a young child can change their life and help them succeed in becoming strong readers themselves. The time you spend reading to a child can have a life-time effect on a child's language development and future reading success.

Using the “9 Best Ways to Read to Young Children” will help you to be better reader and leader!



Reading to a young child is simple: to build interest and excitement so the child will sit, listen, enjoy, and learn.

Why the “9 Best Ways to Read to Young Children” are important - Reading to a young child is simple: to build interest and excitement so the child will sit, listen, enjoy, and learn. It's easy to make reading time interesting and exciting for a young child. Understanding the “9 Best Ways” will help you achieve this goal. If you inspire the child you are reading to, to feel excited and interested, you can be sure he/she will sit, pay attention, enjoy, and learn. And you will also have fun and feel proud of what you are doing to help a child learn and succeed.

Reading to a child helps them to learn.

The goal of reading to a child is to help them learn. Children's books are written to teach young children about all sorts of things that they need to know. The more a child is read to, the more the child will know and the smarter they will be. Children who know a lot, almost always do better in school. The number one thing that helps children learn to read and write is having a large vocabulary of words that they understand and use. Children with large speaking vocabularies almost always do better in school.

Using the 9 Best Ways helps young children learn about people, places, things with thousands of new words and ideas that will light up their brain and make learning in school easier and more fun!

How the 9 Best Ways help children learn - The 9 Best Ways is a recipe for readers to make their read aloud sessions interesting and exciting so a young child can sit, listen, enjoy and learn about our amazing, wonderful world! Using the 9 Best Ways helps young children learn about people, places, things with thousands of new words and ideas that will light up their brain and make learning in school easier and more fun!

1. Know your book

First, read the book to yourself. When you read the book to yourself pay attention to the pictures and get to know the story, words, sentences, and the characters. Reading the book to yourself first will help you understand and read better. As you read the book to yourself, think about how the book will help the young child learn new words, information, and ideas.

TIP: If you are bilingual and are reading an English only book, reading the book to yourself first will help you translate the story and picture information for a child who doesn't understand English. Helping children learn to use words and sentences in their first language during the first 5 years, will help them be more successful when they start to learn to speak and read English in Kindergarten.

TIP: Children love to listen to books over and over again - learning to remember stories is an important skill.

2. Find a quiet reading and listening place

A quiet reading place helps a reader and child focus on the book being read. Find or make a cozy and comfortable reading area - take away things that might distract the child from listening - like toys, or other books. Make this a regular and welcoming reading place.

3. Cuddle up

Reading a book to a child is much more fun if it is a shared experience. Sit close, side by side. Look at the book together. Talk about and point to the pictures; let the child help hold the book and turn the pages.

4. Read slowly

Reading aloud slowly helps a child think about and understand the words, sentences, and story details. Young children need extra time to understand what's being read and talked about. Reading slowly also helps the reader to make the story more interesting by talking about pictures and using interesting character voices.

5. Make your voice interesting

Make the story and the words on a page come to life by using your voice. Every character in the book can have a different voice which will help a young child understand who is talking. You can change your voice, making it sound high or deep, loud or quiet, strong or soft, silly or sweet, grumpy or nice. A lion's voice might be strong and loud, but a bird's voice might be high or soft. A monster's voice might be growly.

Using your body or hands can also help a child understand what is being talked about. Using facial expressions can make the story and words in a book come to life and help a child understand. For example: Use voice and gestures when you say, “Look at that monkey’s loooooong tail!” “This elephant is HUGE!” “He’s such a tiny (using a squeaky little voice) little mouse!” Use facial expression when you say, “Everyone at the party yelled, **SURPRISE!**” or “The little girl was sooo sleepy!” It’s like acting: it’s a little scary at first. You have to practice and be a little brave, but you can do it and the child you’re reading to will LOVE it!

6. Point to pictures as you read

Pictures add important information that helps a child understand the meaning of the words. Pointing to the pictures while you read or talk about the book will help a child see and understand what’s being talked about, and learn new words to use. Pointing to pictures while you talk about them is a powerful way for young children to learn about new things.

7. Talk about the pictures

Children’s books have wonderful pictures that add a lot of important information and details to the story. Talking about pictures helps children understand and learn about new words and ideas. Talk about pictures by explaining and describing. For example: “Look at that big, black dog - he’s looking and searching for something - I wonder if he’s searching for his bone! What a long, and bushy tail he has!” or “Look at the five, funny, fat green frogs - one, two, three, four, five!”

8. Use “I wonder” statements

Using “I wonder” statements teaches a young child how to think. Wondering sparks curiosity and imagination! Wondering leads to discovery and learning! Wondering together keeps a child interested and often leads to “finding out”. I wonder statements are not questions for the child to know the right answer for. Instead, they’re openings for curiosity, for example; “I wonder how many bones he has hidden Let’s find out”, “I wonder what kind of dog he is..... He looks kind of like a chihuahua”, “I wonder what will happen to the caterpillar at the end of the story....”

Important! Using wonder statements is better than asking young children too many questions. Reading together is about exploring, discovering, and learning together. It’s not about being “tested” for correct answers. That’s not fun!

9. Have fun

Reading should be fun and interesting for both the reader and listener. If it isn’t fun - change it up until it is fun! Sometimes just looking at and talking about pictures is all that is needed to get started. Allow the young child to choose the book, hold the book, turn the pages, or “read” to you.

If your read aloud sessions are going well - **congratulations!**

However, there are many reasons a child may not sit, listen, and enjoy being read to. It is the reader's job to notice and think about the problem, why it might be happening and the best way to fix it. Getting a child to be excited and interested is the most important step to a successful read-aloud session.

First, ask yourself... have you been using all 9 best ways to read aloud?

Most young children have a short attention span or may not have learned how to sit and listen. Here are ideas to help a child who doesn't pay attention to become interested and excited to learn.

Tip: Allow a child to interrupt the story with comments, questions, ideas, and wondering; this will keep them interested and help them make important new brain connections.

Help is Here. What to do when the child...

doesn't listen. It's okay to just look at and talk about the pictures in the book; reading the story can come later when the child is excited and interested. Picture books are filled with details and amazing pictures to wonder and laugh about. You don't even need to look at every page - just look at and talk about the pictures that are most interesting!

seems bored. Using the pictures in the book, play a hunt and find game to get a child's attention. "I see three lady-bugs.... can you find three lady-bugs?" "I see an animal with a really long tail.... can you find the animal I'm talking about?" "Now, you can have a turn to tell me what to find!"

doesn't speak much English. A child will not be interested in listening to a story if they do not understand the words and language being spoken. Tell the story in the child's home language or try to find someone who can help translate or tell the story using the child's home language.

is scared or shy. Use a stuffed animal to help the child feel comfortable - invite the child to choose a favorite stuffed animal to hold while listening to the story - or just start to tell the story to the stuffed animal while the child watches and listens.

is distracted by things in the room. Set up a comfortable reading place before the child enters the room - remove things that might be distracting. Be sure to sit side-by-side with the child when reading aloud.

just wants to play. Tell the child that both of you will have a few minutes to do something together after the session - but only say this if you know that you will have time to keep your word!

doesn't know how important and fun reading is. If the child is four years or older, tell the child how books and stories will help him/her learn about the world - that learning new things can be super fun! Explain that the more things a person knows, the easier and more fun school will be! Learning and reading is a super-power!

takes the book and runs away. Do NOT chase the child. Get another book, sit in such a way that the child can see - and read aloud interestingly to yourself. Be entertaining.

pulls on the book. Let the child have it. "I see you want to hold the book! Do you want to turn the page for me? Look, here's a yellow giraffe with a LOOOONG neck!" Allow the child to hold the book, turn the pages, or "read" the story to you.

takes the book, goes away, and sits down to read it. Go sit down next to the child and look at the book together.

And/or...

What if the book is too hard or not interesting? Choose a different book that you think the child will enjoy.

How to use your imagination to help make a book more interesting. Tell the child we're going to make believe the place we're sitting is a... castle, fort, tent, palace - use whatever is around to make believe in a way that relates to the book. Make believe the place where we're sitting is a bench at the zoo, or a bench in the park, or the back seat of the car that the dinosaurs in the book are driving.

Finally

If you've thought about the problem and tried some of these ideas and the child is still not interested, talk with the adult in charge about the problems you are having and ask them for help.

Thank you for being a mentor to the younger children by volunteering and doing your best!

Proud to be a youth mentor.



Readtomeproject.org / info@readtomeproject.org