

Especially for parents of preschoolers! 

# Let's Read Together

*Reading and Storytelling*

Children ages 3-5 are ready to learn about books and take part actively in sharing them. Reading picture books with your preschooler helps spark her imagination and her love of stories.

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## What is the practice?

Sharing, reading, and looking at the pages of a picture book with your child and asking questions help prepare her to read. The more books you read with your child, the more her love of books will grow. Provide your preschooler with books on topics that interest her and share in reading experiences that capture her imagination. Reading storybooks with young children is a vital activity for later reading success.

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## What does the practice look like?

Let your preschooler choose a picture book for you to read to her. Find a comfortable place where the two of you can sit together to look at the pictures. Spark her interest in the book by actively involving her in the storytelling process. Let your child ask questions and encourage her to point to the pictures in the story. Ask her questions about the pictures and point out connections between the pictures in the books and her own experiences.



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## How do you do the practice?

Provide your preschooler with a variety of picture books to choose from. Let her pick out the book she wants to read.

- **Ask "wh-" questions:** Asking your child questions as you read helps her think about and understand the story. Start by identifying what is going on in the pictures. *"What is this dog doing?"* Agree with and expand on her answers. *"That's right! That dog is chasing a cat! What do you think the cat is trying to do?"* You can also relate the book to your child's own experiences. *"Our dog likes to chase cats too, doesn't he? What else does he like to chase?"*
- **Reread and retell:** Rereading the same book helps your child become familiar with the story and learn to connect the words that are being said with the words she sees on the page. Once your child becomes familiar with the story, have her retell it in her own way. She can use the pictures and her memory. Encourage and praise her attempts even if her version is different from the original.

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## How do you know the practice worked?

- Does your preschooler show greater interest in reading?
- Does your preschooler have a favorite book, one that she wants you to read again and again?
- Does your preschooler retell stories while looking at the books?

# Take a look at more reading together

## *Shared Reading*

Four-year-old Tremain loves animals. His mom found a word book at the public library that is filled with pictures of animals. Tremain loves looking at this book and will spend time looking carefully at each page. He likes to have his mom read the book to him. When he asks her to read it to him she always says, "Only if you will help me with the names." Tremain likes to help and he readily agrees. Tremain's mom points to and names the animals and then asks her son to help name the rest.



## *Picture Reading*

After going to the grocery store with her mom, four-year-old Kristen brings her mom a word book to look at. "Mommy, this book has pictures of the grocery store. Read it to me?" It is right before dinner so her mother replies, "Okay. But I need to finish making dinner. I might need your help. Why don't you start, Kristen? Tell me what you see on this page." "Okay," says Kristen, "there are oranges and apples and lettuce, but what's this, mommy?" "That's an artichoke. Next time we are in the grocery store I will show you one," her mom says.

## *Favorite Words & Signs*

Noah has a hearing impairment. When his parents read to him—usually at bed time—they sign and point to the pictures in the book. Noah always picks out a book he would like for his parents to read to him. Noah's favorite book is a book with a label under every picture in the book. Both Noah's mom and dad have read this book to Noah many times. He likes all of the pictures and he likes that each picture has a name. Sometimes when reading, Noah's mom says, "Show me your favorite picture on this page." Noah points to a picture and sign the name. Noah's mom asks, "Why is that picture your favorite?" Noah signs why he likes the picture best. He enjoys spending this special time of closeness with his parents.



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# Read It Again!

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Young children love to hear their favorite books read aloud again and again. Repeated readings help preschoolers master the story lines, ideas, and language of well-loved stories.

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## What is the practice?

Repeated reading lets children learn the words, story structure, and use of language in a story. Parents can read a story many times so their preschool child can talk about and be part of the story. Many young children, especially those with speech and language delays, are not able to grasp an entire story on the first reading. So hearing books read several times helps them learn and notice new things.



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## What does the practice look like?

When hearing a story several times, a child can figure out what a new word means by the rest of the words he hears. Sharing a book again and again lets your child notice repeated sound patterns. If you point out some letters and words each time you read a book, he can begin to match letters to sounds.

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## How do you do the practice?

Here are some ideas that will help you make repeated readings interesting and fun for your young child.

- Encourage your child to be part of the fun as you share favorite books. Welcome her comments and questions. Ask her what happens next.
- Preschool children are most likely to enjoy repeated reading when the books are about things they find familiar and interesting. A great place to start is by reading the child's favorite book.
- Let the child choose the story. Preschool children will often choose the same book again and again on their own.
- Be excited about the story, even when you're reading it for the umpteenth time. Read-aloud sessions are much more than saying words and turning pages. When you express your own excitement about the pictures, story, setting, and characters, the child will be excited too.
- Let your child "read" the story to you. Children get to know the words and plots of stories that have been read to them many times. They enjoy saying the words and turning the pages, just as if they were reading the book.
- Involve your child in repeated reading when you are both relaxed and unhurried. Perfect times? How about when you snuggle together at bedtime or when you're passing time in a waiting room.

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## How do you know the practice worked?

- Does the child bring you the same book to be read over and over?
- Does she seem to have "picked up" new vocabulary words or an understanding of the story?
- Does the child make comments about the story or tell what's going to happen next?



# Take a look at more repeated reading

## *One More Time!*

Five-year-old Aaron loves pretending to build things with his toy tool kit. In the children's section of a bookstore one afternoon, Aaron finds a book about his favorite television show. Aaron's father sees him paging through the book and goes to sit beside his son. He begins to read the story to Aaron, taking time to let him enjoy each picture. When they reach the end of the story, Aaron takes the book and opens it to the beginning. His father takes the hint and reads the story again, this time pointing out different things in the pictures. When they reach the end of the story, Dad asks if he'd like to buy the book. Aaron's face lights up as he agrees. On the way home in the car, Aaron looks through his new book and "reads" the story aloud. At bedtime that night, Aaron picks the new book for his bedtime story. Dad happily reads it to him for the third time that day. He pauses on each page to let Aaron enjoy the pictures and talk about what's happening in the story.



## *Role-Playing While Reading*

Four-year-old Janet and her mother wait together at the doctor's office for Janet's yearly check-up. The office is busy and the wait is long. Janet's mother has brought along a few of Janet's favorite books. She pulls the books from her bag and asks Janet to choose one for them to read together. Janet picks the one about a princess that they have been reading almost every night at bedtime. Janet's mother begins to read the book aloud. She makes Janet laugh by talking in funny voices for each of the characters. She offers to let Janet take the princess role. She pauses so that Janet can "read" the princess' lines in the story. Janet knows all the princess' lines by heart and eagerly says each one in her most princess-like voice. Afterward, they read

the story yet again, with Janet "reading" a different role while her mother is the princess. Mother and daughter have a great time with the story until Janet's name is called by the nurse.

## *Let's Read Again!*

Three-year-old Javier has severe language delays and uses hand signs to communicate. Javier was given a book about a baby rabbit by his father. This week it's the only book he is interested in. Javier brings the book to his mom and dad at nap time. "Do you want me to read the bunny book again?" asks his father as he stretches out next to Javier. Javier snuggles in between his parents and Dad begins to read. Dad points to the pictures and engages Javier by asking, "Who is that?" Javier smiles and makes the sign for *rabbit*. "Yes, that's the rabbit," his father answers. He carefully articulates the sounds in the word *rabbit* while making the sign. When they have finished the book, Javier signs, "Again, Dad!" His father starts the story from the beginning. This time he asks Javier different questions he can answer by signing.



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# Read With Me

*Reading and Storytelling*

When a child asks to be read to, a parent has the perfect chance for shared reading with the child. This handout includes ideas you can use to read with your preschool child.

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## What is the practice?

During shared reading, try to get your child to ask questions. Together you can talk about the pictures or about what's going to happen next. Ask your child to tell about a time he had something happen like the story's characters did. You might want to stress certain words in the book. You could even use real objects for the words in the story. Shared reading helps children learn new words. They become aware of story structure, speech patterns, and learn about the reading process.



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## What does the practice look like?

A child sits with his parent while the adult reads a book. The child makes a comment about the story and the parent answers the child's comment in a positive way. The adult continues with the story, sometimes pausing to ask a question. For example, "What do you think he should do now?") or to point out something in the picture ("The girl looks really excited!"). When the child responds to the parent's question or comment, the parent answers with another question or comment. Back-and-forth talking between the child and parent keeps the child interested in the story.

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## How do you do the practice?

To engage a preschool child in story reading, you can do the following:

- Choose stories with topics and characters that are interesting to your child.
- Read at times when you are not hurried. You want to have plenty of time for your child to think about and answer your questions, and to ask questions of his own.
- Pause often to ask open-ended questions, making sure your child is following and understanding the story. For example, ask, "What do you think that word means?" Or ask, "How do you think Papa Bear knew someone had been sitting in his chair?"
- Expand on the child's answers, making it part of a conversation. Remember, there's no "right answer."
- Suggest different possibilities. Ask questions that start with "What if" or "Suppose" to see where the child will take the conversation.
- Pose more and more challenging questions.
- If a child uses pictures or a communication device, use messages that let him talk about the story. For example, program a device with words such as *turn page, more, read, stop, yes, and no*. Add other common phrases that can help discuss the story.

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## How do you know the practice worked?

- Is the child staying interested in the story until the end?
- Does the child ask questions, make comments about the story, and answer questions posed to him?
- Does the child demonstrate a larger vocabulary or better conversation skills?

# Take a look at more reading together

## *What Might Happen Next?*

Four-year-old Eduardo chooses a picture book for his mom to read to him before bed. "What book is this?" asks Eduardo's mom, showing him the front of the book. "pokey puppy," says Eduardo happily. "Yes, it's *The Pokey Little Puppy* (Janette Sebring Lowrey)," says his mother. She opens the book to the first page and points at the picture. "What are these puppies doing?" she asks. "They're playing," says Eduardo. "That's right. They are playing together." She reads a couple of pages. Then before turning to the next page she asks, "What do you think is going to happen next?" Eduardo sits up excitedly and says, "Oh! They'll roll way down the hill!" He makes a tumbling motion with his arms. "Let's see," says his mother. "Turn the page for me." Eduardo turns the page and his mother exclaims, "Look! You're right!" Then she asks him, "Why do you think they did that?" "To go home," answers Eduardo. "You think they want to go home?" asks his mother. "Yeah, they're tired," says Eduardo. "You might be right. Let's see," replies his mother as she continues reading the book.

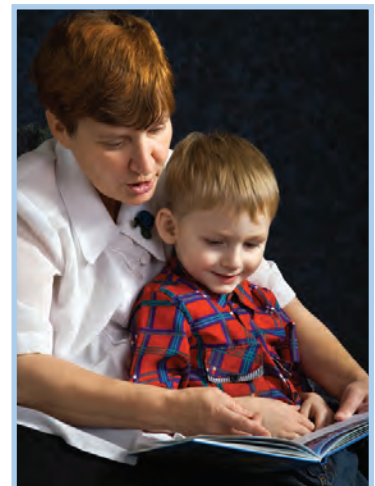


## *Magazines Too!*

Three-year old Benton looks intently at a garden magazine he has found on the coffee table. His father notices that Benton is interested in photos of birdhouses. He motions for Benton to sit next to him on the couch and tell him about the birdhouses. Benton climbs up beside Dad and points to one he likes. His dad asks him why he likes that birdhouse. "I like blue," says Benton. "If you made a birdhouse, what would it look like?" asks his dad. "Big and blue and have lots of holes for birds!" answers Benton excitedly. "Tell me about these birdhouses" says his father, pointing at the pictures. Benton looks at the pictures in the magazine and "reads" about the birdhouses. He and his father talk about the birds in the pictures. Benton points to ones that he has seen in their yard.

## *The Right Touch for Reading*

Five-year-old Tim has a visual impairment. He sits with his grandmother as she reads his favorite story about animals, using a book with textured pages. As Granny reads, she lets Tim feel each animal on a page. Tim's grandmother reads the first part of a sentence, then pauses to let Tim say the rest. Tim smiles as he helps Granny "read" the book by saying the words that he knows come next. When they get to a part about cats, Granny reminds Tim about petting the neighbor's cat that morning. "How did Tiger feel?" asks Granny. "He was soft and fuzzy," says Tim. "What other animals do you think would feel that way?" asks Granny. "Bunnies and hamsters," says Tim. "What animals do you think would feel different?" Tim thinks for a minute, then answers, "Fish and snakes." "I think you're right," says Granny, and she continues to the next page in the book.





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# Book Is the Word

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Reading and sharing word books with your preschooler helps him recognize familiar words, learn new words, and discover print rules. Word books help children ages 3-5 connect words and pictures.

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## What is the practice?

Word books have clearly labeled pictures placed so preschoolers can easily connect each picture with its text. The labels help preschoolers recognize and learn new words. These books support learning by making children feel confident they can “name” or “read” the picture. Reading books to your child is important for building future reading skill.

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## What does the practice look like?

When you share a word book with your child, point to each picture. Read aloud the label that goes with it. Be sure to draw your child into the activity by asking him questions about the pictures. Help your child to be involved in reading by pointing to words that match pictures of objects your child knows. By naming what is in the picture, your child will have “read” its printed label.



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## How do you do the practice?

Give your child many word books to choose from. Choose word books that have pictures about things that interest your preschooler or that have themes your child likes. Remember to ask questions about the pictures to keep the activity interesting and engaging for your child.

- Ask your preschooler to “read” the word book to you and ask questions about its pictures and details.
- Point to objects on the page and let your preschooler name them.
- Ask wh- questions like “What is this?” or “Where have you seen that?” It will help your child connect the pictures and things he knows about.
- Let your child pick out the word books that he’s interested in reading.

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## How do you know the practice worked?

- Is your preschooler showing more interest in books and “reading”?
- Does he point to the pictures and attempt to name them?
- Does he recognize words from his books when he spots them in other places?

# Take a look at more fun with word books

## On the Spot

Four-year-old Maleko chooses a picture book for his father to read with him before his nap. "It's doggy book," he tells his dad. "Okay," says Dad, as they snuggle together and open the book. Dad points to a word that labels an object on the first page. "Rake" he reads out loud. "Hey, do you remember helping me rake the leaves in the garden?" "Yep!" says Maleko, "We made a big pile." "That's right," says his dad. "This rake is blue, but ours is red." He points to another label on the page and asks, "What does this say?" "Hat," answers Maleko looking at the picture next to it. "Good reading! That's the pup's straw hat to keep off the sun," Dad says. "This is his wheelbarrow," he says, pointing to the picture as he reads the label. "I wonder what the puppy will put in it." "Leaves!" says Maleko with excitement, "He'll rake a big pile, too. Just like us!"



## Follow That Interest!



Mattie, who's 4½ years old, and her mother are at the library. Mattie finds a word book about the ocean. Seeing her interest in the book, Mom sits on a bench next to Mattie. "Let's read about the ocean and beaches," she tells her daughter. She opens the book and points to a picture. "Dolphin," reads mom. "That's a dolphin leaping out of the water. Can you leap like that, Mattie?" Mattie smiles and shakes her head. Her mom points to another picture, "What animal is that?" "Octopus!" says Mattie. "Let's read and see," says her mom. She points at the label by the picture. "Yes, you're right. See? This word is *octopus*." Then she asks, "How many legs does the octopus have?" "Help me count them," says Mattie.

## Cartoon Favorite

Three-year-old Jack has developmental delays. Jack loves all things that have his favorite cartoon character on them. Right now the only book he is interested in is about his favorite character. Jack will hand this book to his mom when they are in the living room together. "Do you want me to read the spider book again? Okay," says Jack's mom. Jack sits close to his mom and she begins to read. As she reads she points to the pictures and engages Jack by asking, "Who is that?" She knows that Jack will get excited and that he loves to say, "That's the spider!" When they have finished the book, Jack says, "Read again, Mommy!"

