

Des Moines Performing Arts at home!

Using Drama to move your body, engage your imagination and bring your story to life!

READ-ALOUD STRATEGIES FOR PARENTS

Choose your book:

Select a busy book - a sleepy story might not have as many opportunities for moving around or using silly voices. Stories that have vivid illustrations, a cast of characters and some repetition work best!

Remember: you don't need a whole new set of books. Children love to re-read familiar stories far beyond adults' interest in experiencing them again. In fact, familiar stories are sometimes the best platforms to explore with drama!

Settle in:

Even if it's just you and your child, having a cozy spot dedicated to read-aloud could add some magic. A special "storytime carpet" with a picnic blanket or tiny rug can be enough to make it special to spread out for stories. This also makes it different from bedtime read-alouds, which are often meant to calm little ones for sleep.

Set the Stage:

Look at the book cover together and ask children to guess what they think the book might be about. Name the author and illustrator to reinforce the concept that real people write and draw books. Invite the children to predict what the book is about if it's a new title, and talk about how the book might connect to their own experience or to other books they've heard of or read.

Giving listeners a sense of what they might expect to find can help focus listening. A short hint or summary can be enough, "This is the story of a boy who goes on an unusual trip. I chose it because we are going to go on a trip in the summer." Or "This is the story about a special friendship between a mouse and a whale. I wonder what you will think about it."



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Read:

- Let your voice reflect the tone of the story or the personalities of the characters. Is it a happy story? A scary suspenseful part? Even if you don't fancy yourself an actor, varying pace and volume can do a lot to enhance a reading! Slow your reading down and pause to give time for children to reflect on the illustrations. Use sound effects, hand motions, and facial expressions to make the text more engaging.
- Invite children to become a part of the story with you . Ask questions or give them a line to repeat, a hand motion, or a sound effect that they can add at a certain time.
- Children are naturally curious at a very young age about the visual details of a book and are learning how to use visual clues to get meaning from everything on the page. Point out details in illustrations and characterizations to help children become careful observers. Discuss what they notice.
- Help children imagine not only what they see in the illustrations but also the sounds, smells, tastes, physical sensations, and feelings. Every few pages, stop and ask children to pretend to use their senses to explore a part of the story: "Can you pretend to pet the puppy? How does the puppy feel? What do you think the characters hear? What do they smell?"

Note: Some children aren't used to being read to and will need to develop that interest and ability. Start with short, interesting stories with strong pictures. Allowing active, busy children a bit of play dough to squish or some simple materials to draw with while listening can also help.

Reflect:

Although the goal of read-aloud is to have fun together, it can also be used to expand the world of the story into your living room. Ask children to draw a favorite part, to write what they think happens after the story ends, to consider a "what if" that might have taken the story in a new direction, or to share whether or not they liked or agreed with the choices made by the characters can all inspire discussions that move well beyond the page!



Adapted from Reading Rockets and Scholastic Teachers