



# Once upon a time – why reading is important

Reading aloud and sharing stories with your child is a good way to spend time together and help your child's development.

Reading with your child from when they are young gives them positive messages about learning to read.

## Why read with your child?

### Stories help children develop

Sharing stories, talking and singing every day helps your child's development by letting them become familiar with sounds, words, language and the value of books. This activity builds your child's early literacy skills, helping them to go on to read successfully later in life.

### Stories develop a child's imagination

Reading stories sparks your child's imagination and stimulates curiosity. Interesting illustrations and word patterns, such as rhymes, can get your child talking about what they are seeing and thinking, and help them understand the patterns of language. Exploring stories also helps them learn the difference between 'real' and 'make-believe'.

### Stories help children cope with feelings

Reading or telling stories can be a safe way to explore strong emotions, which can help your child understand new or frightening events. For example, books about going to the dentist or hospital or starting at child care will help your child learn about the world around them.

## Storytelling and songs

Telling stories and singing songs also helps your child develop early literacy skills and have a lot of fun with words.

Consider making up your own stories or sharing family stories. Your child will learn words and develop language skills from shared songs, stories and conversations.

## Tips for reading and storytelling

- Read to your children every day, even for a few minutes. Bedtime is a good time.
- Take your children to the library for story-telling sessions and to choose books to borrow.
- Find picture books that don't have words and make up the story together.
- Be guided by your child about books they like, and read their favourite parts over and over again. Stop when they want to stop, skip the bits they want to skip. Avoid reading stories they don't like.
- Try out a range of different books and stories.
- After a scary bit in a story, stop and let your children talk about it.
- Pay attention to detail in the book, for example, point out the time on the clock in a picture.
- If you have more than one child, read or tell stories that they all like, for example stories about your childhood. Make time to read to each child individually.
- Talk to your children about the things you read, such as the newspaper, so they can see that reading is important to you.
- When your child reads out words on signs or food packets tell them you are proud of their reading.

## Other benefits

Reading stories with children benefits adults too. This time together promotes bonding and helps to build your relationship, laying the groundwork for your child's later social, communication and interpersonal skills.

By looking at books with your child, you can be a great storyteller and a good role model for using language and books.

Your child will learn by watching you hold a book the right way and seeing how you move through the book by gently turning the pages.

## When to read

- Make books part of the daily routine.
- Know when to stop by paying attention to your child's reaction to the story. You can try another book, song or story at another time.
- You do not need to wait to have a book to enjoy reading with your child, for example, you can look at:
  - packages at home or in the supermarket, especially food packaging
  - clothing – What does it say on the t-shirt? What colour is it?
  - letters and notes – What do they say? Who sent them?
  - signs or posters in shops, or on buses and trains – point out signs that have the same letters as your child's name
  - menus – these can be fun for older children to look at and work out what they want to eat.

## Sharing books with babies and young children

- Turn off the TV or radio, and find a quiet place to read so your child can hear your voice.
- Hold your child close or on your knee while you read, so they can see your face and the book.
- Try out funny noises and sounds.
- Involve your child by encouraging talk about the pictures, and by repeating familiar words and phrases.
- Let your toddler choose books when they are old enough to start asking.
- Be prepared to read favourite books over and over again.



## What to read

Young children often enjoy books and stories that have good rhyme, rhythm and repetition. You can also vary the things you read.

- Children like stories with happy endings and often enjoy the ending they have been looking forward to rather than surprise endings.
- Stories that explore the unhappy and angry feelings as well as good feelings are important. For example, try a book about a child moving house and feeling a bit worried as well as excited about it.
- Children enjoy a bit of trickery, humour, jumbled words and people getting into trouble – as long as they can see through it.
- Children relate best to stories about things they know, such as characters their own age.
- Magazines, instruction manuals and TV guides can all be interesting and engaging for young children.

## More information

The Queensland Government provides families with up-to-date information about approved early childhood education and care services in their local area, and has parent tip sheets on a range of topics.

To access the latest information or to find an early childhood education and care service call 13 QGOV\* (13 74 68) or visit [www.earlychildhood.qld.gov.au](http://www.earlychildhood.qld.gov.au).

For service ratings visit the MyChild website at [www.mychild.gov.au](http://www.mychild.gov.au) or the Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA) website at [www.acecqa.gov.au](http://www.acecqa.gov.au).

### Other languages

If you need an interpreter, phone 13 QGOV (13 74 68).

### Assistance making a call

If you are deaf or have a hearing or speech impairment:

- TTY users phone 133 677\*, then ask for 13 74 68\*.
- Speak-and-listen users should phone 1300 555 727\*, then ask for 13 74 68\*
- Internet relay users should connect to the National Relay Service at [www.iprelay.com.au/call/index.aspx](http://www.iprelay.com.au/call/index.aspx) then ask for 13 74 68\*.

### Acknowledgement

The information in this publication was sourced from the Raising Children Network at [www.raisingchildren.net.au](http://www.raisingchildren.net.au)

### Disclaimer

This publication is offered as a guide and should not be considered an exhaustive statement on the subject.

\*Calls from mobile phones are charged at applicable rates.