



HOW TO READ BOOKS TO PROMOTE LANGUAGE

Even before my children could talk, our ritual of reading books together was a priority. Usually done before bedtime (but really anytime is a good time to read!), it was a warm and comfy bonding time and it was a sign that it was time to unwind. Now, years later, my kids are still book lovers. We go to the library weekly and leave with stacks of books that get them through the weekend! Here are some tricks I like to use while reading to promote language:

- 1. Receptive Labels:** While they were very young, they wouldn't even tolerate me actually reading the words on the page. They just wanted to turn pages and be done! So, I would make it fun by asking them to point to different items and characters on the page. This helped to shape up their pointing ability and their receptive vocabulary (how much they understand). As they get older, you can ask them to "point to something you eat" or "show me someone who is dancing" to get in those functions and verbs.
- 2. "I See...":** The interactions we have with our kids are the beginnings of their future social interactions. One of the earliest social skills is turn-taking. Once your child has basic language, take turns pointing out interesting things in the pictures. For example, you could say "Look, I see an airplane" to which your kiddo can reply "I see a dog!". It's important that you each say different things so that your child starts to practice reciprocal conversation and isn't just copying what you say.
- 3. Expressive Labels:** Once my child had some language but still wasn't interested in listening to me read the writing in the book, I would have them practice their expressive labels. I would point to an interested picture in the book and ask "What is this?". If he/she labels it – great! Reinforce with some praise or a hug. If he/she doesn't know the label, this is a great opportunity to teach it. You can use this to teach beyond labels by asking things like "What do you do with a car" (while pointing to a picture of a car) and "What is she doing?" (while pointing to someone who is painting)
- 4. Requesting:** Once they have more language, getting them to use their words to ask for what they want can also be a part of storytime. You can offer them some book choices and they can ask for the specific book they want. You can pause just before you turn the page and wait for them to say "turn the page". You can have them ask to read it in a "loud voice" or a "whisper voice". So many options!
- 5. Story Comprehension:** Finally, the skill that they will take with them into every book they read is the ability to understand the story. We practice this by asking simple questions about the story as we read it. Start off by asking "what" questions about 1-2 sentences that you have read (eg: "What did Sally do?"). Then, read an entire paragraph and ask a follow up question (eg: "Who went to the store?"). Finally, when the story is all done, ask your child to retell the main idea of the story.
- 6. Inferencing:** To take storytime to the next level (4-5 year old), practice the skill of inferencing. This is best with a new book and not one in which they know what will happen. As you read a page, reference the text and the picture and ask your child, "What do you think will happen next?" Guide them to give you an answer that makes sense with the context they were given in the story.
- 7. ENJOY!**