

## Let's Talk Books!

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There can be a lot of pressure to read to your child. We are going to dig into the importance and benefits of books, but first I want to share the many ways we can enjoy books. Sometimes it can be hard for children to attend to picture books or longer stories and that's okay! There are many ways to use books to interact with our child, without reading it cover to cover. I wanted to share some ways to make books more of an interaction, and take the pressure off implementing the "ideal" book-reading scenario.

**Try to get face to face.** This is different from the usual of having your child sit in your lap while you both look at the book. Sit in front of your child, have them next to you on the couch, have them on the couch while you're on the ground, or have them up in their high chair. I recently heard from a family that they read books in the bath. Any situation where you are facing each other and eye to eye will work! It may feel a little weird at first, but it can help with their attention so much.

**Let them lead and "read" in their own way.** Offer two choices and have them pick the book. Let them flip the pages, pick the page, and move onto the next book when they're ready. Grab your own book and follow their actions to build your child's awareness of books. It's okay to not read every word. Comment on the pictures on the page. Since you're face to face it will be easy to see exactly what your child is most interested in. Get some wiggles out and copy the actions from the book. Feel free to change the words! Keep it simple with short phrases or even silly sound effects. Match your child's level. Following their lead can help to find the most motivating concepts to your child, and get into a turn taking groove.

**Use it like a toy!** If your child just likes flipping pages, get your own book and flip with them. Talk about flipping pages fast or slow. Pretend a page is stuck and get excited when you unstick it. Act out some of the actions in the book. Add gestures or sing a song. Make some sound effects for

what's happening in the pictures. I had a parent tell me their book took a turn down the slide. Get creative! Take some turns and have fun!

**Make your own books!** Many kids are still learning to recognize and understand pictures. Having realistic pictures can help them develop this skill. Having pictures of themselves or their own toys/environment can help even more! Try out lift-the-flap books with sticky notes, or touch and feel books using materials around your house (cotton balls, sandpaper, wool, plastic bag, etc.).

You can also make books that show things or activities your child likes, or a special event or outing. Children often love looking at pictures of themselves. Some examples: take pictures as you go through a routine (like dinner time, bed time, or a walk), take pictures of their favorite toys, take action shots and copy them as you flip through the book, or make a book with pictures of family members—just to name a few! Print out the pictures and flip through them, put them on a keyring, or throw them in a dollar store photo album. Whatever works!

All of these strategies encourage more interaction, which creates opportunities for your child to take a turn! Spending this time to get together and focusing on the fun of the moment is the most important part.

### Let us end with some benefits of books:

- Great time to enjoy a feeling of closeness!
- Helps your child learn about things they've never experienced.
- Creates ways to talk about things that don't happen every day (visit to the dentist, new baby).
- Exposes children to new ideas like feelings, solving problems, etc.
- REPETITION—books can be read again and again.
- Portable—bring it anywhere!
- Builds foundation for learning to read and write later on.

