



Read to Me

Learning how to read is a foundational skill that will help your child succeed in school and participate in the world around them. And, for many people, reading is an enjoyable activity.

Parents have a significant role in helping their child with hearing loss develop this important skill. Many parents of children with hearing loss may be concerned about their child's language. Reading aloud to your child is a great tool for teaching your child to listen and talk!

While reading aloud is an important activity for all children, it is especially important for children who are deaf or hard of hearing. Children with hearing loss are more likely to have delayed reading skills. The average reading level for a high school graduate with hearing loss has been found to be at the 3rd grade level. The easiest way to help a young child develop literacy skills is to read to them!

Reading is essential for helping to build connections in your child's brain, starting from an early age. Scientists have found that as you read aloud to your child, your child's brain benefits.

In fact, it's never too early to read to your child. You can begin as soon as your baby is born. Reading from an early age will help your child develop an interest in books and eventually a love for reading.

When you read aloud to your child, she will learn how to listen and understand what she hears. And, she will hear and learn new words.

Unfortunately, children with hearing loss often experience delays in learning new words. Vocabulary is one of the most important skills for developing reading and writing. The more a child hears a word, the more likely they are to use it.

When you read aloud to your child, he learns that printed words having meaning.

Your child learns that words communicate information and that they can be both spoken and printed.

When you read to your child, they learn about people, places, things, thoughts and feelings. The books you read to your child can teach them many important life skills.

Set aside at least 20 minutes each day to read to your child. If your child is enjoying reading time, you can read for longer than 20 minutes. Or you can sit down several times throughout



the day to read. Because your child has a hearing loss, you are helping them develop good listening and language skills every time you read aloud.

While this may sound like a lot of reading, remember that most books for young children are not very long. You will be able to read several books each time you sit down to read. As your child grows older, you may read fewer but longer books. The important thing to remember is to read for at least 20 minutes daily to help foster a healthy relationship with reading. It is the time spent reading that counts!

If you are concerned about holding your baby's attention, or a child who does not seem to be interested in books, you can start with very short bursts of reading time. This could be as short as a few minutes, and then increase time as your child shows more interest.

First, make sure that your child is wearing his hearing technology so that he can have full access to all that you are saying to him.

Second, sit in a way that your child can clearly hear you and see the book. Having your child sit on your lap provides a natural opportunity for your child to hear you while you read aloud.

Reading to your child teaches him how to read a book—how to hold it, how to turn the pages, how to start at the beginning and read through to the end. Let your child hold the book and turn the pages. You want him to learn to love books and reading!

It's never too early to introduce your child to print concepts, such as talking about letters, words, pointing to the title, and using your finger to track direction of reading.

The words in a book provide you with the "framework" for reading aloud to your child, but you don't have to read every word. Most books for very young children have a lot of pictures and a few words. Use the pictures to make up different stories for your child. The important thing is to use lots of words to tell your story.

While reading a book with your child, stop and talk about the pictures. Using this image, you could point to the chicken and comment, "I see a chicken. She is reading a book to her chicks!" You could also ask questions or describe what you see as you point to the things in the story "The chicken is wearing glasses! Do chickens really wear glasses?"

Use the pictures in the books to encourage your child to count, identify colors, or tell you what they see. For example, in this picture you could ask "I wonder what the name of this animal is? OR " What color is the elephant?" OR "Have you ever seen a blue and white checked elephant?" OR "Hmmm...what is this elephant thinking?"

In addition to developing your child's language and listening, reading together helps your child develop thinking and problem solving skills. While you are reading, stop from time to time to



talk about what has happened in the book so far. Then talk about what your child thinks will happen next. Ask her why she thinks that is what will happen.

As your child gets older and his language skills increase, reading books together gives you time to talk with your child about his thoughts and feelings in a natural and open way. Using this example, you can ask higher level question, such as “How do you think the little fish feel?” “Have you ever felt that way?” “What happened to make you feel that way?” Tell your child about a time when you felt the same way.

And, as your child gets older, you can read books together. Take turns reading—you read a page and he reads a page. Let your child turn the pages as you read.

At the end of a book, ask your child what she liked best about the story and why. Tell her what you liked best and why. When you discuss a book you have just read with your child you are developing her critical thinking skills.

Remember, you are the most important teacher for your child when it comes to developing his language and introducing him to lots of words and ideas by reading to him. If you do not have many books at home don't worry. You can go to the library, or even make your own books at home.

Now, go get a book, gather your child in your arms, sit in a comfortable spot and read!