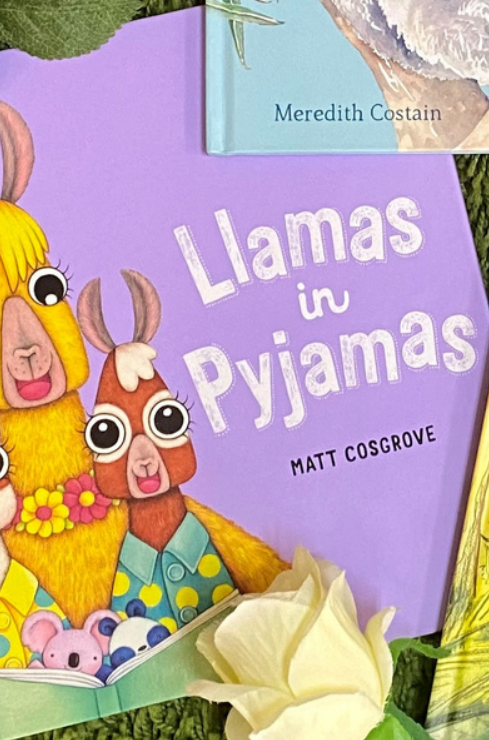




The importance of reading to children





It's in the laps of a trusted parent/carer that children develop a love of storytelling and the written word. Reading and/or talking about pictures in books is a lovely way to connect with your children and foster an early love of literacy.



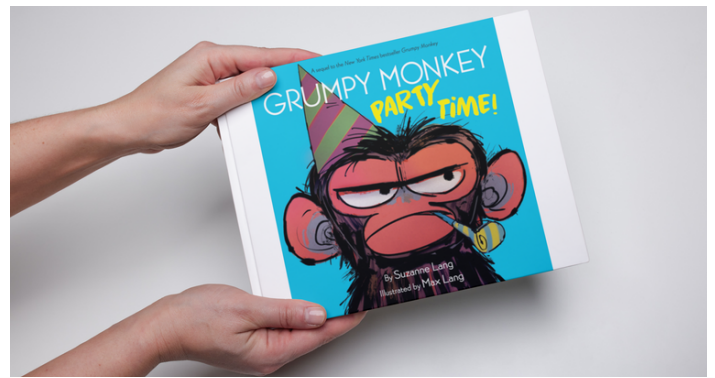
Why reading to your child is so important

Babies and small children love the sound of their parents/carers voices as they share with them, strengthening their bonds of attachment. Toddlers enjoy books that allow them to make sense of their world, and identify with familiar pictures, images and sounds. Preschool aged children love books that have a predictive pattern or rhyme (such as **Mem Fox's 'The Green Sheep'** or **Pamela Allen's 'Mr McGee'**). These books build on children's interests and are beautifully illustrated to attract children's attentions and engage with them.

Many children make associations with certain books, 'favorites' if you like, and will read (or ask you to read them) over and over. While you may feel frustrated at reading the same story repeatedly, your child is unconsciously communicating their connection with the tale and developing his or her love for literacy.

This 'repeat' reading is also the beginning stages of reading by rote and later for letter and word recognition. It is an important part of the reading process, and your child will move on to another book when they are ready. Research reveals that it's the closeness that parents/carers share with their child whilst reading to them that leads to a love of reading.

It's the attention, care and quality time in which you connect with your child that ignites a child's interest in books, so even talking about the images in a newspaper or catalogue is valuable!



Talk about how we use books. Show your child how to handle books with care, holding the book the right way up. Look at the cover, read the title, begin from the front and get to the end. Use your library, fetes, second hand shops and markets to get a variety of books. Spend at least ten wildly happy minutes every single day reading a book to children. From birth read at least 3 stories a day. It may be the same story three times. The children will learn something new each time. Read with an interesting voice.

Listen to your voice – make it loud and soft, fast and slow, and high and low. Read to the kids with joy and enjoyment. Real enjoyment for yourself and great joy for the children. Read stories that your children love, over and over and over again. Let them hear lots of language by talking about the pictures or anything else connected to the book. Look for rhythm, rhyme and repetition in books; little children love it.

Play games with the things that you and the child can see on the page, such as letting children finish rhymes, and finding the letters that start the child's name and yours, remembering that it's never work, it's always a fabulous game. As you read, think about your body position, eye contact and how lively your face is. Read aloud every day because you just adore being with your child, not because it's the right thing to do.

Encouragement to read

Perhaps you feel a little self-conscious reading to your child? Maybe you have limited English language skills? Or you just want a change from the bedtime book ritual?



Here are some suggestions that break away from the standard 'read a book' approach to encourage your child's interest in literacy:

- Sing nursery rhymes and songs to your child regularly – the rhythmic patterns aid in text predication and will later help your child to 'crack the code' of reading.
- Allow infants to mouth and suck the pages of board books (under parental supervision) as this is their first **"taste"** of reading and it encourages them to choose and select books.
- Borrow books with no words such as **Jan Ormerod's 'Sunshine' and 'Moonlight'**.
- Talk to your child about what they think might happen in the story. Discuss the illustrations and make up your own tales together.
- Use puppets and toys as props to tell stories.
- Re-enact favorite books/tales using play dough or other open-ended materials such as leaves, twigs, pebbles, shells etc.
- Encourage your child to draw regularly. A child's first marks and scribbles are leading to writing, which is the pre-cursor to reading.
- Play fine motor games such as puzzles with knobs as they build on the physical skills needed for pencil control.
- Chalk draw on the pavement and talk about your pictures.
- Borrow CD stories to listen to while travelling in the car or during quiet rest time.
- Make and post your own post cards and letters.
- Collect catalogues and talk about the pictures such as **'how many green items can we find?' or 'find the bananas'**.
- Play games that encourage listening and speaking skills such as **'Find something in your bedroom beginning with the 'b' sound'** or **'Animal Sound Bingo'**
- Use lots of descriptive language with your child, such as **'this shell is white and smooth'**
- Finger paint.
- Play with bubbles, slime or other gooey, messy materials. This is great for developing fine motor control and expressive speech.