

■ Learning Through Play

# Reading to Your Child

**T**he time you spend reading to your child tells him or her that you value reading and time spent together. Here are some tips to help make this experience even more fulfilling.



■ **Remember the “snuggly” factor.**

Of course book content is important, but so is the one-to-one coziness of storytime. This warmth enables your child to associate wonderful feelings with the experience of reading.

■ **Choose good books.** See the tips listed below.

■ **Look over each book beforehand.** Is the story the right length? Do the words correspond to the illustrations? Children are drawn to pictures, so make sure they are appealing and will hold your child's attention.

■ **Once you've chosen a book, familiarize yourself with the story.** Your comfort level has a great deal to do with your child's enjoyment. The better you know the story, the easier it will be for you to stop at a particularly interesting point and ask dramatically, “What do you think might happen now?”

■ **Try to match your reading to your child's mood and comfort.**

If a story is interesting but your child is getting restless, don't hesitate to say, “I really like this story, but it is getting a little long. Let's finish it tomorrow.” On the other hand, if your child is content and involved, take the opportunity to stop during the reading to talk about what a character might do or discuss how you both would feel in a specific situation.

■ **Ask questions that call for a variety of responses.**

Pose questions that will inspire your child to use imagination and thinking skills and don't have a right or wrong answer. For example, “What are some other ways we could make this story end?”

■ **Your child's relationship with books and reading changes with age and development.**

Infants enjoy being read to, but as your child gets older his or her tastes, attention span, concerns, experiences, and sense of humor change. Many toddlers enjoy board books with a word or two on each page and clear, logical illustrations. Older children begin to recognize specific characters and remember them even when the book isn't around. Gradually, children are ready for longer sitting times and longer stories.

## ■ Five Tips for Choosing Books With Your Child

**1. Select good literature.** Good books for young children reflect events and experiences that take place in their everyday lives.

**2. Look for quality illustrations and/or photographs.** Illustrations should correspond to the words on the page. Photos should be clear and realistic.

**3. Find story lines that deal with the kinds of feelings and situations your child is experiencing.** Learning to do things independent-

ly, making new friends, and missing family members are all a part of your child's world. Look for books that deal with these subjects and bring them to successful resolutions.

**4. Check books for antibias values.** Choose books that reflect an unbiased approach to gender, race, culture, age, and individual abilities. Seeing diversity treated respectfully in books will help your child learn to accept and appreciate differences in others, while feeling good about himself or herself as an individual.

**5. Look for books that you both can enjoy.** In other words, have fun! It won't be long before you browse through a bookshelf at the library or bookstore and spot not only books that reflect episodes and feelings your child is experiencing, but also books with appealing characters and engaging plots that the two of you can talk, cry, laugh, and wonder about together. A good part of your child's enjoyment of books is simply the good feelings that come from sharing something that you like, too!