



U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Administration for Children and Families
Office of Family Assistance



NRFC Tips for Dads: The Benefits of Reading to Your Children

Reading to your children from an early age will help them become interested in reading – and children who enjoy reading tend to do better in school and have more employment opportunities as adults! Children often become interested in reading by watching and mimicking their parents or participating in child-parent reading routines. Reading and telling stories to your children is not just good for them, it's fun for dads too. It provides a positive way to stay involved in your children's lives and creates memories to share with them as they get older.



Read every day.

It doesn't matter what you read (books, magazines, comics, blogs), but make an effort to read, preferably something you enjoy, every single day. Your children will see you reading and they will become more interested in reading along and with you. Hopefully you will enjoy it, too!

Read words aloud to your children.

When you're out and about together, sound out the name of your street and point to the sign; when you're eating breakfast, do the same with words on the cereal box. This can help children learn new words, connect words with how they're written, and understand spelling concepts.

Think of reading or storytelling as a bonding experience.

You can start talking to them during their first weeks of life. As you read to them, ask questions about the story (e.g., "Why did Jack do that?" "How many birds do you see in that picture?"). Young children love hearing the same story over and over again. Even before they learn to read they'll start learning the story and will be able to tell you what's happening on each page.

If you'd rather tell stories than read, do that!

Make it interactive by having your children help you develop a make-believe story, or recite back a story you have told them before, recite nursery rhymes or jingles, tell stories about when you were young, or check out books of photographs and talk about the pictures.

Use "Mad Libs" with school aged children.

Mad Libs are activities where children make up a story by adding words in the blanks without knowing the story beforehand. The result is a funny, silly story that fathers and children can enjoy reading after the story is "written."

Use apps and technology.

If you have a smartphone or tablet, there are apps you can use to build your child's literacy skills, for examples, go to fatherhood.gov and type "apps" into the search box.

Take Time to Be a Dad Today

Toll-free: 877-4DAD411 (877-432-3411) | Fax: 703-934-3740 | Help@FatherhoodGov.Info | www.fatherhood.gov

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Let your kids pick books that are interesting to them.

They may prefer picture books to start with. They may like stories about animals, sports, children, adventures, mysteries, or just about anything you can imagine. Whatever catches their interest, you can join them and enjoy the experience together.

Know that the quality of the time you spend with your children matters more than the quantity.

You might not have as much time as you'd like with your children because of work, living arrangements, or other difficulties. Don't stress about that – think about ways you can have fun and help them learn while you're together through playing, reading, and storytelling. Reading time, especially bedtime reading routines, provides important, non-physical bonding opportunities for you and your children. It gives your children a chance to reflect on their day and share stories and ideas with you.

Read with your school aged children even if you do not share a residence with them.

You can read to your child over the phone, through FaceTime, or Skype. Or, get a copy of their favorite or school-assigned book and read along with them.

Go with your instincts.

Introduce new words; ask them to explain what the words mean; and encourage them to enunciate a word more clearly. This type of interaction helps them learn how to communicate more effectively and makes you special in their eyes!

Looking for ideas? Check out these books!

- *Night Driving* by John Coy
- *From Head to Toe* by Eric Carle
- *Guess How Much I Love You* by Sam McBratney
- *We're Going on a Bear Hunt* by Michael Rosan and Susan Oxenbury

Resources for Dads

- Top 100 Children's Books of All-Time: www.childrensbooksguide.com.
- www.pbs.org/parents/education provides Reading Tips with ideas and activities to help you and your kids have fun. The website includes Bookfinder, which helps you find books based on the age and interests of your child.
- www.guysread.com is a web-based literacy program for boys with the goal of helping boys become self-motivated, lifelong readers. Similarly, the mission of www.boysread.org is to transform boys into lifelong readers. Both of these websites provide lists of books that boys like to read.
- The Department of Education provides reading resources for parents: www.2.ed.gov/parents/read.
- The Reading Rockets website, www.readingrockets.org, provides printable guides and videos from the public television series Launching Young Readers for parents and teachers.
- www.scholastic.com has a Resource Center with resources broken down by age and reading level of child.
- The Reading is Fundamental website, www.rif.org, provides booklists, articles, and activities.
- Dolly Parton's imagination library, www.imaginationlibrary.com, is a program that provides children with a selected book each month.
- Public libraries provide large selections of children's book to borrow for free, simply type "local library" into any internet search engine to find one close to you.