



# FIRST YEAR AT SCHOOL

## MAKING THE MOST OF STORY TIME

**The most important thing you can do to support literacy development is to share storybooks with a child from birth.**

Sharing a story builds a strong bond between you and your child. The language of stories is different from everyday talk. Listening to a story expands a child's vocabulary and builds their concentration as they follow the meaning of the story.

We do different things with a storybook for children at different ages:

- We begin by showing a baby the pictures and talking to them about an object on the page.
- With toddlers, we draw their attention to familiar things, people and places in the story.
- We ask preschool children to suggest what might happen next and talk about what happened after the story ends.
- When children are getting ready to go to school, we show them 'how a book works' and model what a reader needs to do—read from the first to last page, interpret the pictures, look for familiar words and listen for repeated phrases.

'Interactive reading' or 'conversational reading' is the best way to support early literacy through story. It simply means:

- Choosing a book with the child (repeat readings of favourites are fine).
- Reading the story in a way that invites the child to help to tell the story.
- Stopping every now and then to ask 'What is happening in the story?'
- Expanding on the child's answers and reviewing meaning as the story progresses.

Reading at home should always be a pleasure. If it becomes a chore, stop and do something else. Remember the child might be tired after a long day at school. They might not be confident with reading the book aloud. The goal at home is not to 'teach reading'. The goal is to develop a love of language and to demonstrate the pleasures that lie within the pages of a book.

### Things you can do to develop your child's knowledge about books and reading ...

- help them to connect stories with their own experience—'There's a little dog, just like the one we saw the other day'
- ask open-ended questions that help them predict—'Oh, what is that bear going to do now?'
- talk about the way a book works—its title, author and illustrator; its front and back covers; and the beginning and end of a story
- demonstrate how 'to read' a page—showing that we read from left to right and from the top to the bottom of the page in most printed material
- encourage the child to point to and say familiar words in a story
- respect 'pretend reading' as the child shares a book with a friend or a toy
- ask them to 'call out' words they know, and join in when words like 'Splash!', 'Swishy, swashy through the long grass' are repeated in the story.

### Summary

Sharing a picture storybook builds a strong bond between you and your child. Listening to a story expands a child's vocabulary and builds their concentration. Through the shared social experience of 'conversational reading', children learn to love words and understand how books and stories work.

**Want to know more? Visit [www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/firstyear](http://www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/firstyear)**