

# Read to Your Children—It Matters!

**READING ALOUD TO CHILDREN** for 15–20 minutes a day (or 1000 books before kindergarten)

- helps drive **cognitive development** (the ability to think and understand)
- leads to better **language acquisition** (vocabulary and communication)
- affects **readiness to learn to read** (prepares children for academic success)
- strengthens the **bond between parent and child** (builds relationship)
- develops a **love of books** and reading (that can lead to lifelong Bible reading)

So start reading to your children! Use these **FIVE TIPS TO HELP YOU SUCCEED** at this important task.

**1. Introduce books early and at each new age and stage.** Babies enjoy books with bright colors and simple pictures. For toddlers, look for board books with touch-and-feel or lift-the-flap features. Preschoolers begin to enjoy picture books. As children grow, find easy readers, chapter books, then novels. Consider your child's interests.

**2. Fill your home with books.** Add books to all the areas where toys and games are kept as well as in family living spaces. Get to know the bookstores in your community and extend your book budget by shopping sales. Shop thrift stores and used bookstores too. And don't forget the public library, where you can borrow books for free!

**3. Be creative to find time to read.** Keep a book or two in baby's diaper bag. Store a few books in the car too. Turn an unexpected wait at an appointment or sports practice into read-aloud time. Read while children eat a snack or play in the bathtub. Play audio books during drive times. Add a book to your child's bedtime routine.

**4. Make it fun.** Try varying your voice or adding sound effects as you read. No need to be shy! Talk about the pictures and let your child interrupt the story to ask questions. Wiggly toddlers can't sit still? Not a problem. Let them play quietly right nearby as you read.

**5. Read aloud with older children too.** Even children who are reading independently often enjoy read-aloud times. Parent coach Sarah Hamaker (SaraHamaker.com) says, "As long as your child wants to be read to, read to him. There's something magical about listening to a parent read a book to a child. Who would want to cut that off if the child—or tween or teen—enjoys it?"

**DIANE STORTZ** ... Making God's wonders known to the next generation

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