

Dear Dad:

Reading picture books with your child is a great way to help your child learn new words and help your child tell more complete descriptions about what they see. Look through a book before you read it with your child for the first time. Depending on your child, the first time you read a book together, you will likely do most of the talking yourself. Make sure that you point out the names of things your child may not know. The next time you read the same book, do the following for each of the pictures/objects you named when you and your child read the book the first time:



- **Ask "what" questions:** Point to the item in the book and say, "What's this?" or "What's this called?" Avoid questions that your child can answer with a "yes" or "no," or by pointing.
- **Follow answers with questions:** When your child names an object, ask a question about it. For example: "What color is the truck?", "What is this part of the truck called?", "What is the dog doing?", or "What do we use the bowl for?"
- **Repeat what your child says:** Let your child know his or her answer is correct by repeating it back: "Yes, that's a cow."
- **Help your child as needed:** If your child isn't able to answer your question, give the correct answer and ask him or her to repeat what you have said.
- **Praise and encourage:** Tell your child when he or she is doing well by saying things like: "Good talking!" or "That's right. Good job!"
- **Follow your child's interests:** If your child shows an interest in a picture either by talking or pointing to it, follow it up immediately by asking questions to let your child talk.

Open-Ended Questions and Expanded Descriptions

Once your child is able to readily respond to the "what" questions you ask, start using more general, open-ended questions as a way of getting your child to say more than just one word at a time. It is also important for you to build upon what your child says to help your child learn how to tell even longer descriptions of what he or she sees in the pictures.

Ask open-ended questions: Continue to use questions during storytime as a way to get your child talking about the pictures. Now though, instead of using specific "what" questions like "What is this?", ask more general open-ended questions that require your child to answer with more than one word. For example, "What do you see on this page?" or, "What's happening here?"

Help when needed: When your child doesn't know anything else to say about a picture, provide something for your child and try to get him or her to repeat it. For example: "The duck is swimming. Now you say it, The duck is swimming..."

Ask your child to say more: When your child gets used to answering open-ended questions, ask your child to say something more by asking another question, like "What else do you see?"

Expand what your child says: When your child says something about a picture, praise him or her and add a little to what's been said. For example, if your child says "The dog is barking", you might say "Yes, the dog is barking at the cat." In this way, you expand on what your child has said with some description or endings your child left out and provide a new piece of information.

Keep your expansions short and simple: Make sure you build upon your child's phrases just a little so that your child is able to imitate what you have said.

Have your child repeat: If you encourage your child to repeat your longer phrases, he or she will start using them more quickly.

Tips and Suggestions:

Have fun! Try to keep your reading times fun and like a game. One way to do this is to switch between asking questions and just plain reading. For example, you could read one page and then have your child tell you about the next page.

Keep your child's mood in mind. Keep it fun.

Make your questioning sound as natural as possible. It shouldn't seem like a test or your child will not want to do it. Keep a conversational or playful tone so the reading can be a fun activity.

Sincerely,

