

Guidelines for listening to children read

These guidelines were produced by Barbara Braxton, former Teacher-librarian, for volunteers at school who listen to young children read during one-on-one reading tutoring sessions.

They are also relevant for parents at home listening to their children read.

They are provided here for schools, with Barbara Braxton's kind permission.

They are written from a child's perspective, about what "works" for them as novice readers.

Children should always work on a book they have heard or read before, when working with an unfamiliar adult or in an unfamiliar situation. Professor Marie Clay, who is acknowledged as the expert in children's early reading behaviours, says **85% of a child's reading should be easy, familiar reading.**

Author Mem Fox believes that **every child should hear at least 1000 stories before they go to school** so encourage the tutor to read a story to the child so the child becomes more familiar with the language, rhythm, cadence and sounds of the language. Have them review the book they read last time and, if the child seems comfortable, invite him/her to read it again as a sort of "warm-up".

I like reading to you when:

- we have a regular time that's right for both of us so you are not distracted
- we have a quiet, comfortable place that is just for us
- we talk about the book, its title and illustrations, so I can find out what it's about. It only takes a couple of minutes and it helps me focus my thoughts on what I will expect you help me with - like finding some of the tricky words, like 'ferocious' and 'gnawed', and you tell me what they mean, before I read.
- I can hold the book for myself and turn my own page.
- you DON'T cover up the pictures. They make the book fun, and they help me to decide which reading clues to use.
- you stay as quiet as you can and only help me when I am really stuck
- you tell me when I'm doing a good job.

You can really help me when:

- you understand that I am doing the best I can. It really upsets me when you say "That's wrong, I've told you that word before, you should know it by now!" or "That's wrong, sound it out." Instead, please think of something that will help me work it out, like this: "You just read 'the fireman pulled the house off the truck and aimed it at the fire.' Does that make sense? What do you think it could be that would make sense?"
- you let me continue to read if my mistake makes sense (e.g. if I say "This is my home" when the words in the book are "This is my house") because I'm still reading for meaning.
- You learn how to help me when I do get stuck

If I have trouble you can :

- wait about 10 seconds before you interrupt. I might be thinking about it already

- tell me to get my mouth ready for the word I don't know e.g. "The boy fell into the w- - - ."
- help me to think of a word that would make sense e.g. "What could the boy fall into?" remind me to look at the picture for a clue e.g. "Look where the boy fell in the picture."
- give me a clue for the meaning of the word
- read the first part of the sentence back to me e.g. "The boy fell in the"
- encourage me to read the first part of the sentence again
- say "That's right" or "Good try" and then let me continue reading so I don't lose the plot.

When we have finished you can :

- praise my efforts and my self-corrections such as, "I liked it when you went back and changed 'river' to 'water'. That was clever."
- praise my efforts for trying to make my reading interesting for you, such as "I liked the way you used a squeaky voice for the mouse."
- talk with me about our favourite parts of the story such as. "You obviously liked the part about ... Why?"
- talk with me about the pictures in the book to help me see their connection to the story and details I might have missed
- talk with me about what might have happened if
- talk with me about what might have happened next ...
- ask me questions about the characters and the plot of the book such as "How did you feel when the giant was angry? Can you find that part in the book? Did you think he deserved to get stung by the bees? Why?" This helps me really understand the story and the relationships between the characters and what happened to them. Sometimes it even helps me sort out problems in my own life! I might even feel comfortable talking to you about them.
- ask me what I might have done if I had been in that situation
- talk with me about the language in the book and new words I might have learned or not understood
- suggest other books on similar topics to the book I enjoyed.
- say something nice that will make me want to read to you again

Of course, I want to remember the magic of the story **so don't ask me all these things at once**, just one or two so I can think about what I have read and what I have learned.

If we are not enjoying ourselves we can :

- stop and try again another time
- take turns at reading a page each, especially if the words are really hard
- let you read while I listen
- choose another book