



Reading with Children By Kathleen D. Ross



One of the first and perhaps easiest acts you can do as a parent or adult is to model reading and writing. Yes, using your cellphone is reading, and texting is writing. But your cellphone is typically just for you. Yes, you share photos and silly videos at times. But sharing a picture book? Or creating a grocery list together? That's meaningful and relevant sharing at their level. Let your child choose a book at a library or store. Let them 'write' an item on a list. They'll feel proud of doing what you do.

Board books are designed with toddlers in mind. Chunky for developing fingers to turn pages. Sturdy for mouthing. Colorful pictures that highlight details. Easy to explore on their own.

Picture books are strategically written to entice children into the story. Characters look to the right to encourage page turning. Repetitive lines encourage memorization. Rhymes encourage word play. Predictable outcomes guide self-regulation. "What do you think will happen next?" *I know, I know!* Yes, they're hooked. After several readings of a well-written story with a relatable theme, magic happens. Children finish rhyming lines. They memorize repeated lines. Eventually, they retell the whole story. Reading becomes an enjoyable shared activity.

Here are some ideas to further explore books together:

- Discuss what's in the pictures. Consider doing this before reading the text. Ask your child point to, then label specific items in the pictures. Find hidden objects in pictures.
- Match colors of objects in pictures (e.g., red apple to red coat). Match colors to what's in the immediate environment (e.g., Grandpa's red hat).
- Count items, animals, or people in the pictures (e.g., eight monkeys).
- To explain unknown words, use known synonyms (e.g., brisk = cold). Keep explanations short.
- Thoughtfully choose a meaningful word in the text and ask for its antonym (opposite) (e.g., the opposite of cold is hot). *How does that change the story?*
- Once your child understands rhymes, list other rhyming words. Be playful and creative.
- Together, create a different ending to the story. *"What do you think would happen if ___?"*
- Point to the words in the story as you read. Show them words in the environment, such as "STOP" on a stop sign.
- Once your child shows interest in letters, have them find them in a book's text.
- Ask open-ended questions to further the story. *How do you think the three bears felt?* This encourages deeper thinking.