

Why It's Important to Read to Your Kids

An often-told story, appropriate for the modern age when many children are attached to electronic devices, concerns a parent who presents her child with a book.

"What's this?" the child asks.

"It's a device that will take you on an exciting adventure, introduce you to fascinating people, and transport you to faraway lands and times," the parent replies.

"Cool," the kid replies, opening the book and starting to read.

The parent smiles, not mentioning the happy coincidence that the book will also reduce the family's electricity usage.

Some believe that the idea of reading to your kids, especially during the period when they can understand verbal language but can't yet read on their own, is something of a lost practice. But reading to children can provide mental health and intellectual benefits that last well into adulthood. Kids who are hooked on reading may be more likely to avoid being addicted [to more dangerous things](#), such as drugs and alcohol, since they are rarely bored.

Reading to Children Is an Opportunity for Bonding

A 2008 study claims that reading to children helps [strengthen the parent-child bond](#). Reading can be a pleasant way for adults and children to spend time together.

Reading time is something both the parent and child can look forward to during an otherwise busy day that includes school, homework, and household chores. Children might remember such sessions with great fondness later in their lives.

Reading to Children Promotes Listening Skills, Cognition, and Language Development

While an article in Scholastic describes the [benefits of listening to a recorded book](#) and comparing the sounds to the words on a printed page, the same principles apply when

adults read books to them. Just like a recorded audiobook, an adult reader can embellish the words on the printed page with fun sound effects and voices, reinforcing the idea that reading is fun instead of a chore.

One study suggests that reading to babies [as young as nine months old](#) can help develop their language and problem-solving skills later in life. According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, [early exposure to language](#) can produce benefits that can continue into the child's teen years.

When adults read to children, it helps [children develop language skills](#), according to the National Center on Early Childhood Development, Teaching and Learning. The practice can introduce young people to new words, since books sometimes contain language that people do not necessarily use in everyday conversations.

Reading to Children Expands Their Attention Spans

It's no secret that electronic devices can foster a short attention span in both children and adults. The National Alliance on Mental Illness suggests that overstimulation by technology is [robbing our children's abilities to focus](#).

Educators suggest that reading to a child can help develop his or her focusing skills and [hold their attention](#). Young children tend to be easily distracted under the best of circumstances. But if they become accustomed to people reading to them, they may find it easier to sit still and get lost in the story. A strong attention span and memory skills can benefit children when he or she goes to school and performs other tasks.

Reading to Children Helps Them Exercise Their Creativity

Reading to a child opens up new opportunities for fostering creativity. By reading stories to kids, an adult will be able to take them – vicariously – to meet people and visit places that they would otherwise never encounter.

Books such *The Hobbit*, the Harry Potter books, or the Narnia stories introduce fantasy adventure to the young people. Science fiction, from the classic Robert A. Heinlein-penned novel *Starship Troopers* to 2011's *The Martian* (both adapted into

popular films), not only excites a child's imagination but could interest them in STEM (science, technology, engineering, math) fields they can explore as they grow.

Nonfiction works shouldn't be neglected. Kids often enjoy books about dinosaurs, space travel, insects, and history.

Reading to Children Gives Them Life Lessons

Children's books impart life lessons. The Wizard of Oz books teach that self-reliance and determination can help people overcome obstacles. The Harry Potter novels stress the importance of friendship, especially when faced with an all-consuming evil (Voldemort). They demonstrate that even people who seem the most disagreeable (Snape) might have surprising positive qualities. Speaking of good qualities, biographies of prominent people from history can provide examples for children to emulate.

Adults reading to children should not overemphasize the lessons contained in the books. Kids are smart and perceptive. The more stories that depict characters doing the right thing, the more children learn about moral character, lessons that can last a lifetime.

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