



## **Julie and Emma's 10 Tips for GETTING THE MOST OUT OF READING WITH YOUR CHILD**

Education and parenting experts agree that reading to and with young children helps them better understand their world and develop important language skills. Most importantly, when parents and children read together, children develop a love of reading that can last a lifetime. But how can busy parents *maximize* the value of reading time with their children?

1. **Start reading with your child as early as possible.** Even tiny babies love to hear the rhythms and intonations of your voice (poetry and rhyming text is great!) and to look at colorful, eye-catching artwork. Get them used to the idea of looking at and listening to a book as soon as possible... this is essential in helping a child cultivate a life-long appreciation for reading.
2. **Cuddle with your child while you read together.** This is a kinesthetic way to help children subconsciously associate reading with warmth, joy and love, and helps seed the ground for passionate readers later in life. Plus, it makes for great bonding time for both of you!
3. **Trace the lines with your finger as you're reading.** With young children who are just learning to read, this helps them to follow along and associate the letters and words with the sounds they are hearing and the pictures they are seeing, encouraging them to learn to read themselves.
4. **Use character voices or accents.** Children love to hear the voices of individual characters come to life, and this can really help activate the story and characters for them and engage their imaginations.

5. **Read with “color” in your voice.** This is probably the most important tip of all. Keeping your voice alive and interesting can make all the difference in terms of a child’s concentration and ability to follow a story. Use emphasis here, enthusiasm there, tenderness another place. Find the cadences and rhythms of the author’s language, and try to convey the mood or the characters’ intentions. You don’t have to be a ham, or yuck it up so much that the listener pays more attention to your vocal acrobatics than the words you are reading, but do try to stay away from monotonous reading. Keep it fresh!
6. **Stop from time to time to ask questions.** Check in with your listeners about their thoughts and reactions to the story or pictures – why do you think he or she did that? What would you do in that situation? What do you think is going to happen? Do you see what I see?
7. **Personalize the story.** Look for ways to insert the child’s name into the text, especially if it’s a book that speaks directly to a child and only uses pronouns, or to substitute the name of a character or place.
8. **Role-play with dialogue.** If your child is old enough to read, divide the character roles between you, and alternate reading the dialogue together. This is a great way to draw a child into the story, and to help them learn to read aloud with animation.
9. **Follow your child’s passions and interests** – Does he or she love animals? Sports? Cooking? Dressing up? Nothing will teach kids to love reading more than picking up on your enthusiasm for it and being able to share the joy. Be willing to read the same books a hundred times in a row, or to change character’s genders or names, if that will engage your child more in the story. In this way you can affirm for your child the value of having one’s own passions and perspective.
10. **It doesn’t have to be books!** If there's nothing else at hand or you're some place where you can't access a book, a magazine can make for fun reading as well. Find one that speaks to some area of interest – sports, animals, fashion – and see what stories you can find inside or even make up from the pictures. The important thing is to spend time sitting with kids, turning pages and exploring and discovering together.

## **BONUS TIP!**

**Record your voice reading a favorite story.** Make your own “Book on Tape” (or CD) for your child - that he or she can play when you’re not around, perhaps following along in the book. This can be especially helpful at bedtime, even as a transition to sleep.