



# Practica Program

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[www.practicaprogram.co.za](http://www.practicaprogram.co.za)



## Reading with your Child

### Why read together?

Long before a child learns his ABC's and enters school, he needs to have a number of skills under his belt that are called "early literacy" or "pre-reading" skills.

Practica Parents know how to use reading and other age-appropriate activities to help build neural networks in various regions of their child's developing brain during the early years of life.

Just as a reminder: there are hundreds of activities in the Practica Parents' Guide that focus on nurturing and developing these skills. These can be found under "Sensory Perception" in the baby section, and under "Group 3 Activities" in the section for older kids, from 2 to 6 years of age.

However, it is interesting to note that studies performed by the National Commission on Reading in the United States confirmed that there is a critical link between the amount of time that parents or caregivers spend specifically on reading aloud to children, and later reading success.

As a matter of fact, the American Academy of Pediatrics issued a Press Statement in 1997 that states that the evidence is so decisive in this regard, that reading to a baby and young child should be viewed as a necessary parental responsibility, along with fastening the little ones' seat belts and providing good nutrition!

(You can read more about the research at: <http://www.getcaughtreading.org/readingtoc/hildren.htm>)

This is in line with what we know, since parents have discovered for themselves over the years that reading and stories improve vocabulary, develop thinking skills, memory, creativity, emotional skills and concentration skills.

We also know that pictures are important and that children develop important pre-reading skills when they repeatedly look at the illustrations and pictures in story books. Not only do they learn to focus on visual details – they also learn to recall visual images, notice differences between these images and see them in their mind's eye.

Being read to also broadens a child's horizons, as he learns about different countries, cultures, animals and situations, as well as about feelings, fantasies and the basic idea of good versus evil.

And, of course, reading with your child is a way to invest in your relationship as it builds memories and creates a sense of togetherness.

### Babies and toddlers.

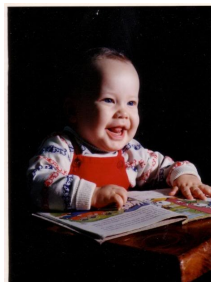
Start during the first months by sitting with your baby on your lap and talking about pictures in a card board or cloth book.

Choose books that have a lot of rhyme and repetition. Being able to hear the rhyme and rhythm in a language is called phonetic and phonological awareness. This is a very important predictor of early reading success. The content of the books that you buy or borrow from the library will naturally change as a child develops, but predictable patterns in books facilitate language learning, so it's important to continue to look for as much repetition, rhyme and rhythm as possible – even when children are older.

Read to your child EVERY DAY so that he hears the affection in your voice, your love for language and playfulness with words.

Babies focus better when they see only one picture at a time, so look for books with a simple picture on one page and one sentence orientated on the opposite page.

Read books again and again. Repetition builds confidence and creates feelings of security in young children as it helps them discover that they can predict their world.



Make sure that your child can see and touch the pictures. Steer his hand to point to the pictures on the page. Raise and lower your voice, with lots of OOOHs and AHHHs.

From 10 months, lift the page a little, and encourage your baby to help turn the page.

Praise him when he starts pointing at pictures and tries to imitate your sounds.

Give your toddler time to look at a picture, and be on the lookout for attempts from his side to draw your attention to something that he notices.

From 18 months onwards, you can give your child easy access to a few age-appropriate, safe and sturdy books, to give him the opportunity to learn how to page through a book on his own from time to time.

### Older children.

Continue to set aside some time as often as possible to enjoy reading together. Allow your child to choose a book for you to read.

Continue reading predictable books, which play with the language, where certain phrases and sentences are repeated over and over again. Most children, who are lucky enough to own books like these, continue to view them as favourites for many years.

In addition to these, make sure to expose your children to as many fairy-tales and classics as possible. Kids love being able to make the funny voices, tell parts of the stories and maybe even act out the stories. Don't be worried if some of the classics seem to be rather "violent". According to researchers, being confronted by a witch, a wolf, or a giant in fairy-tales is a safe way for a child to explore emotions such as fear and aggression – in preparation for real life. This explains the popularity of these stories!

Pay attention to what is happening in the story as you read and try to act somewhat "larger than life" to focus your child's attention. Exaggerate emotions and repeat certain animated emotions at certain points.

Spend time looking at pictures. Point out how an illustration portrays what you have just read in a book. Try listen to what your child has to say before you ask a string of questions. However, when needed, a few questions about the pictures will probably encourage your child to look at them more closely and talk about them more.

When your child shows a particular interest, such as cats, stars, horses or dinosaurs, try to find a book on the topic. These books may not offer the rhythm, rhyme and repetition that we usually look for, but they cultivate vocabulary and a love for books.



One last tip: read anything within sight out loud. Your enthusiasm as you read everyday messages - like the words on a cereal box - demonstrates that the printed word is a treasure waiting to be explored.

So there you go – happy reading!