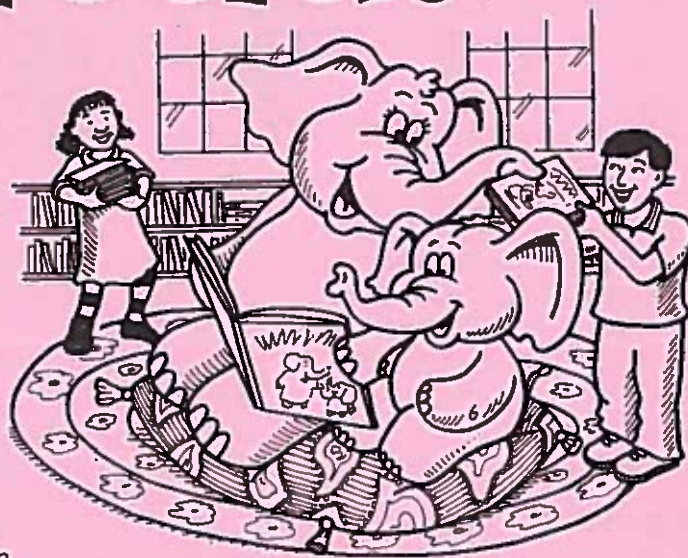


Read Aloud!

It's a gift every parent can give: reading aloud to a child before he can read on his own. And once a youngster can read alone, continuing to read aloud can build his vocabulary and keep him excited about books.

Here are ideas for helping your child get the most from story time. We've also included titles that are especially good for reading out loud.



Three parts of reading aloud

From choosing a book to talking about what you've read, you can fit learning and fun into every minute of story time.

1. Before. Let your youngster pick a story, even if she always reaches for the same one. Familiar stories are comforting, and she'll recognize more words each time she hears a story. To introduce her to new titles, you can choose the next story.



Read the title and author before you open a book. Look at the cover picture, and predict what the story might be about. ("This is *Corduroy*, by Don Freeman. Look—that bear is missing a button. I wonder what happened to it.")

2. During. Allow your child to set the tone. She may want to point out rhyming words, ask questions, tell you something the story reminds her of, or turn

back to an earlier page to look at a picture again. This lets her participate in reading aloud.

You can draw her attention to pictures of objects by pointing out things mentioned in the story: "See—he thinks that's his button on the bed." Talking about a book builds comprehension and makes reading aloud more fun. Tip: Relax while you're reading. Laugh and let your child see how much you enjoy books.

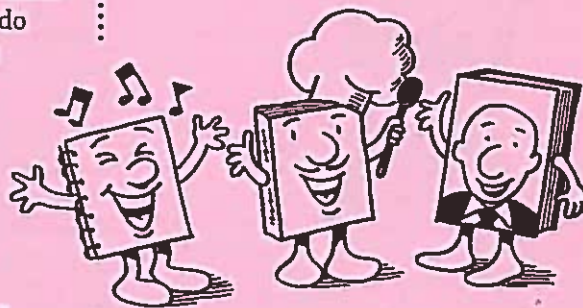
3. After. Have your youngster show you her favorite page and explain why she likes it. Compare the book with another story you have read to help her make connections between books. ("*Corduroy* reminds me of *Home for a Bunny* because they both have a character that needs a home.") Ask your child questions about the characters' feelings so she can learn to read between the lines. ("How do you think *Corduroy* felt when the girl came back?")

You might also help her start a read-aloud journal. Your youngster can draw a picture of her favorite part, write words describing how it made her feel, or write sentences telling the plot. She'll pay closer attention as you read when she knows she'll be drawing and writing in her journal.

Books and more

Use read-aloud time to introduce your child to a wide variety of book types. For example, he can learn about a person, a place, or an animal when you read biographies or nonfiction books. Or read a choose-your-own-adventure story and take turns picking paths for the characters to follow.

Think outside the book, too. Ask your child to read a recipe as you cook or to read directions for playing a board game or putting a toy together. Poems, song lyrics, and plays are fun to read out loud and are great for showing expression. You can also read stories that your youngster has written!



continued

Read everywhere

Experts recommend that you read to your youngster for at least 20 minutes each day. Many parents do this at bedtime, but you can also surprise your child with books at unexpected times and places.

For example, pack books and a picnic lunch, and head to a park or out to the backyard. On a hike, take a break to read a chapter while sitting under a tree together. Carry along a magazine to the swimming pool and read articles or jokes aloud. If you're going out to eat, tuck a book into your bag and pull it out while you wait for your food. Reading aloud is also a good way to pass time on an airplane, a bus, or a train.

Sharing read-alouds

Build a bridge to independent reading by asking your youngster to help you read. You might have her read the words along with you, or you can take turns reading every other page. Try passing a story around the table and having each family member read one page.

It's also fun to read with a friend. Suggest that your child invite a friend to bring a book over. They can read aloud



to each other. Or they might arrange to meet at the library, where they can select books to share.

Guest readers

Hearing other adults read aloud exposes your child to various reading styles and many new books. Attend story hours at libraries and bookstores. Leave books for babysitters and ask them to read to your youngster. See if relatives will call your child for long-distance read-alouds.

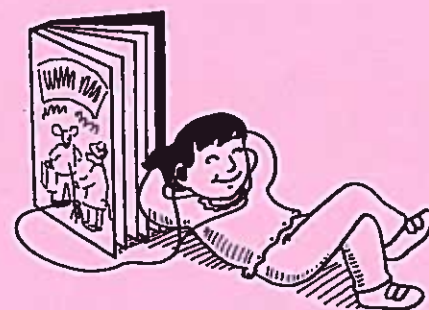
You can be a guest reader, too. Ask your youngster's teacher if you can read to the whole class, a small group, or individual children. In addition to helping out the teacher, you'll help your youngster make the connection between reading at school and reading at home.

Recorded books

Any time is story time with a book on tape, CD, or MP3 player. By listening to a recording and following along in a book, your youngster will learn to read new words and practice reading at a good pace.

You can borrow audio books from the library or find low-cost options in book club catalogs sent home from school. Or download audio books from an online bookstore.

Another great option is to record yourself reading your child's favorite books—she will love hearing your voice! Use a tape recorder, or put a recordable CD in your computer and read a story aloud into the microphone. Label the recordings, and store them with your youngster's book collection.



Book Picks

Click, Clack Moo: Cows That Type If cows could communicate, what would they ask for? The ones in Doreen Cronin's



story can type, and they leave Farmer Brown a note requesting electric blankets. When he doesn't bring any, they go on strike! (Available in Spanish.)

Koala Lou Everyone loves adorable Koala Lou, especially her mother. But when her siblings are born, she's no longer the center of attention. Of course, the little koala soon discovers she's loved, no matter what. A sweet story by Mem Fox.

A Seed Is Sleepy This nonfiction book explains how seeds turn into plants. Dianna Hutts Aston uses science vocabulary in simple rhymes that encourage children to listen. The illustrations identify seeds, and charts show the steps they go through to become plants.

Honey, I Love Eloise Greenfield's poems are about things the little girl narrator

loves, like riding down a country road with her family or jumping into a swimming pool. A lively look at family life.

Humphrey the Lost Whale This true story by Wendy Tokuda and Richard Hall tells of a humpback whale that accidentally ended up in the Sacramento River. Humphrey was lost for nearly a month before he was rescued and led back to the Pacific Ocean.

The Teddy Bears' Picnic In Jimmy Kennedy's picture-book version of this classic song, teddy bears plan a special picnic in the woods. There are games, balloons—and honey. The story's rhythm and repeated lines make it a nice read-aloud.

Reading Connection Beginning Edition

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Easy Things You Can Do At Home to Raise Readers...

- Read to your child every day. Make it a special time when you both can relax, snuggle and enjoy books.
- Build a home library and fill it with your child's favorite titles.
- Sing nursery rhymes and finger plays to introduce an awareness of speech sounds and patterns.
- Visit your local library on a regular basis and borrow a wide range of books and audio materials. Take part in activities the library provides for young children.
- Use words to describe aloud what you are doing or what you see around your house and community.
- Learning depends on repetition. It is good when children ask for favorites to be read again and again.
- Encourage your child to "read" picture books to you.
- Be a good role model by reading for enjoyment and information yourself.
- When reading aloud, use lots of expression, different voices and sound effects when appropriate.
- Read books that play with language such as poetry, tongue twisters, rhymes, and riddles.

• Office of Commonwealth Libraries.
Pennsylvania Department of Education.



And Raise Writers...

- Be sure your child has different types of writing implements such as pencils, crayons, markers and lots of paper to use them on.
- Encourage your child to tell you stories. Write them down and have your child illustrate them.
- Create labels so your child can match them to objects throughout your home.
- Before you go to the grocery store write a shopping list together. Have your child cross items off the list after you select them.
- Create scrapbooks about your family, special occasions, and trips.
- Keep a journal with your child and have him/her summarize what happens each day while you write it down.
- When you are writing notes or emailing, ask your child what he/she would like you to tell a relative or friend.
- Write a list as your child dictates to you. It could be a wish list, a to do list, etc
- Encourage print recognition in everyday situations such as street signs and local businesses.
- After a trip to a park, zoo, or other special place have your child dictate what you did, what you saw as you write it down. Have your child add pictures to complete the story.

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Tips for Family Reading at Home

- 1. Set aside time for reading every day. Pick a time that works best for you and your child. Many children like a story before bed, but story time happen any time of day. Some children may not want to sit still for a story, so work in a story with another routine—during bath time or snack time. But whenever you choose to read, make it a habit!**
- 2. Choose stories that both you and your child will enjoy. Your child will probably like stories with rhymes, repeated refrains, pictures to identify, and other interactive details. But if you enjoy the story too, your enthusiasm will show, giving story time a happy energy that your child will grow to appreciate.**
- 3. Don't be afraid to be silly! Give characters funny voices, be melodramatic, and change the words of a familiar story to something unexpected! You do not have to be a great actor to tell the story, but if children see you having fun with a story, they learn that stories are fun!**
- 4. Encourage your child to participate. Let your child predict what happens next in an unfamiliar story, and tell portions of the story themselves in a familiar one. Ask your child to identify the pictures in a book or to describe what they think is happening.**
- 5. Be a reading role model. Let your child see you pick up a book or magazine and read for your own benefit. Show your child how reading helps you find out things, like what ingredients go into dinner and what time a favorite movie is going to be on television. Model good book handling, and give books their own special places in the house.**

For more ideas and information, please visit The Pennsylvania Center for the Book at www.pabook.libraries.psu.edu/familylit/ and the Family Reading Partnership at www.familyreading.org/ and the PA One Book, Every Young Child Website at www.paonebook.org

READERS ARE WRITERS!

In books, your youngster will find people and animals, real and imaginary places, fascinating facts, and interesting words that can inspire him when he writes. Here are activities to help him make connections between reading and writing.



FAMILY PICKS

This cute display encourages your child to write opinions of the books he reads. Once a week, let each family member choose a favorite book to display on a bookcase or shelf—like “staff picks” in a library or bookstore.

When your youngster selects a book to display, help him write what he liked about it. If he’s not writing yet, he could dictate his words to you. (Example: “I was happy that the little boy learned not to be scared of monsters anymore.”) Put out his review along with the book. Family members can read each other’s opinions and discover new books to enjoy.



NURSERY RHYMES

Just as your child is part of a family, words come in families, too.

Explain that a word family is made up of words that end with the same combination of letters—so they’re fun to use in nursery rhymes.

Read nursery rhymes in library books or online, and let your youngster look for word families. She could pick a verse to write on a piece of paper and then underline or circle words that share an ending. Example: “Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall / Humpty Dumpty had a great fall.” Underneath, have her list other words in the same word family (*ball, call, hall*).

STORY MOBILE

“First this happened, and then that happened!” Give your child practice with putting story events in order with this activity.

Read a story, and have her decorate an index card for each event. For *The Little Red Hen*, she could make cards showing the hen planting seeds, watering seeds, cutting wheat, grinding wheat into flour, making flour into dough, and baking bread. Help your youngster write about each event on one side of a card, and let her illustrate it on the other side.

Then, she can hole-punch the top of each card, thread yarn through, and string the cards in order on a coat hanger. Finally, ask her to use her mobile to retell the story.

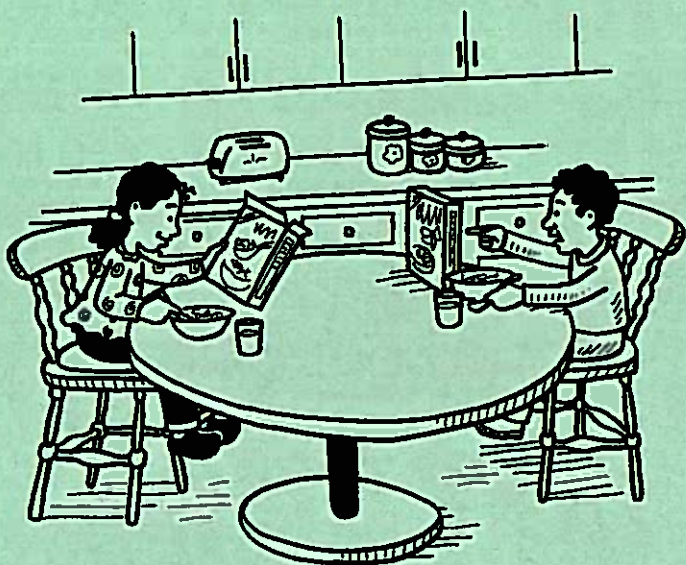
PICTURE POSTCARD

Let your child take an imaginary trip to a story setting. Read a book together, and suggest that he send you a postcard from a character in a place that’s mentioned. Imagining himself inside the book can help him relate to the characters and better understand the story.

For example, he might write a postcard from the candy house in *Hansel and Gretel*. What does Hansel see, and how does he feel? Or he could write from Max’s imaginary forest in *Where the Wild Things Are* by Maurice Sendak. Your youngster will practice reading for details as he decides what to write.



continued



CEREAL BOXES

Put reading and writing on the breakfast menu with this idea. Give your child a few cereal boxes to read while she's eating. What kind of information does she notice? She will find the cereal name and maybe a catchy slogan on the front. The back may have a recipe, tips for healthy eating, or a short biography of an athlete.

Encourage your youngster to cover an empty cereal box with construction paper and write and draw on it. She might make up a slogan and her own recipe or tips. ("Try this cereal on top of your yogurt or ice cream!")

PET INSTRUCTIONS

If your child could have any animal on the planet as a pet, which one would he choose? Read nonfiction books about animals with him. Then, ask him to pick a "pet" and write instructions for taking care of it.

He can use facts he learned from the books and write directions about how to feed and care for his pet. For a platypus, he might write, "Feed him insects and worms for breakfast. He likes to swim, so let him play in the bathtub."



WHAT AUTHORS DO

Authors can be great "teachers" for young writers. Here are some things your youngster might listen for when you read to her.

• **SETUP.** What is the *plot structure*, or *setup*, of the story? It may have a repeating phrase like "Brown bear, brown bear, what do you see?" in *Brown Bear, Brown Bear* by Bill Martin Jr. Or it might be told in a *circular plot*—in *If You Give a Mouse a Cookie* by Laura Numeroff, each event leads to the next until the story comes full circle. Or the story could simply be told from beginning to end. Ask your child to identify the plot structure and write a story like that.

• **WORD CHOICE.** Where could your youngster find interesting words to use in her writing? In books! Suggest that she jot down words she likes on slips of paper and put them in

a zipper bag. In *Stellaluna* (Janell Cannon), she may pick *mango*, *swooped*, and *leafy*, for example. When she writes stories, she can dump out her bag and look for fun words to include.

• **POINT OF VIEW.** Talk about who is telling the story. The main character might say "I"—that's *first-person point of view*. If the author uses *he* and *she*, the story is told in the *third person*. Try changing the point of view. For instance, if it says, "Edward knows that people walk their dogs, but he wonders why he never saw anyone walking a cat," you would say, "I know that people walk their dogs, but I wonder why I never saw anyone walking a cat." Which way does your child want to write her next story?



Write Now

Every day is filled with chances for your child to write. Eating, playing, and even laughing can turn into an opportunity to pick up a pencil.

Here are 12 ways to use writing to sharpen your youngster's creativity and thinking skills—and improve his spelling, vocabulary, and handwriting.

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1. Family poll

Does your family prefer cats or dogs? Would everyone rather eat noodles or rice? Your child can conduct a daily poll to find out these answers and more. He'll learn to write questions, and you'll all learn more about one another. Help him come up with a question with two choices for an answer. He might write, "Do you like spring or fall better?" He can tape his question on an empty tissue box and have each person drop a slip of paper inside to vote. At the end of the day, have him count the votes and announce the results.



2. Picnic menu

Making a menu is a great way to work on descriptive writing. The next time you plan a picnic, let your youngster write out a special menu. Ask her to look in the refrigerator and pantry to find ingredients. Fold a sheet of paper into thirds, and help her write the names

of the foods in categories. She might put sandwiches in one column, side dishes in another, and beverages in a third. Encourage her to use as many adjectives as possible: "Creamy peanut butter and sweet grape jelly on whole-wheat bread" or "Crunchy orange carrots with cool ranch dip." Use your child's ideas to pack the food, and then display her menu at your picnic!

3. Author mail

Children love to write to authors—and they're thrilled when they get an e-mail or a letter back. Help your youngster find the e-mail or regular address of her favorite author or poet by typing his name into a search engine (such as Yahoo or Google). In her note, suggest that she say which of his books she likes best and why. For instance, she could tell Arnold Lobel, "Owl at Home is my favorite because Owl is scared of his own feet!" Remind your child to ask the author a question or two (example: "How old were you when your first book was published?"). Finally, help her proofread her note by checking that each sentence begins with a capital letter and ends with a period.

4. Game rules

Has your youngster ever played Dinosaur Hide-and-Seek? How about Musical Tag? Ask him to invent a new game and create a set of rules for it. He'll learn to write clear instructions. You may need to prompt him with questions, such as "What do you do first?" or "How do you win the game?" For Dinosaur Hide-and-Seek, he might list: (1) Pick one person to be "It." (2) Everyone else hides. (3) "It" counts to 10. (4) Everyone roars like a dinosaur. (5) "It" follows the sounds to find them. (6) The first person he finds wins and is "It."



continued

5. Daily summary

Challenge your child to choose each word carefully when she writes. Give her a small notepad. Each evening, have her write the date at the top of a page. Then, help her write about her day in six words. *Example:* "I read two new books in school." She'll learn to keep her writing specific and concise. And at the end of the month, she'll have a record of everything she did!

6. Comedy skit

Your youngster will be motivated to write with this laugh-out-loud activity. For one week, ask each person to find something that makes him laugh, and write it down. You might help your son jot down a joke that a friend told him or a funny line from a TV show. You could find a funny article in the newspaper.



At the end of the week, have a stand-up comedy night. Everyone takes a turn reading what they wrote.

7. Packing list

Is your child planning a sleepover at Grandma's, or is your family taking a vacation? Ask your youngster to make a list of everything she'll need. She'll see that writing is practical. Remind her to include clothes, toothbrush and toothpaste, books, toys, and snacks. Or suggest that she make a list for an imaginary trip to anyplace she likes (the moon, a castle, under the sea). What special supplies would each place require? (a spacesuit for the moon)



8. Message in a bottle

Keep in touch with your youngster while encouraging him to practice writing. Write a message for him on a piece of paper, roll it up, and slip it into an empty, dry water bottle (make sure the paper is sticking out of the bottle so it's easy to get the message out). Leave the bottle in his room. After he reads his message, he can write one back to you and put it in your room. Continue leaving messages every day.

9. Advertisement

Help your child practice persuasive writing by creating an advertisement. If you're having a yard sale or hiring a babysitter, let her help you write a classified newspaper ad. Or she can help you write descriptions of household items to sell on eBay (www.ebay.com) or Craigslist (www.craigslist.com). Talk about ways to describe objects (color, size) and ways to get readers' attention ("perfect condition" or "just like new"). For example, if your youngster has outgrown her bike, she might write: "Pretty pink bike. 12 inch. Looks brand new."



10. Reading log

Here's a fun way your child can practice writing while keeping track of what he reads. Help him draw a giant ice cream cone. Next, have him cut circles from colored paper to represent scoops of ice cream (*examples:* pink for strawberry, green for mint chocolate chip). Each time he reads a book, he gets to glue a scoop to his cone. Help him write the title and author along with a sentence about the book on each circle. Encourage other family members to make their own cones and to add scoops for books they read, too.

11. Greeting cards

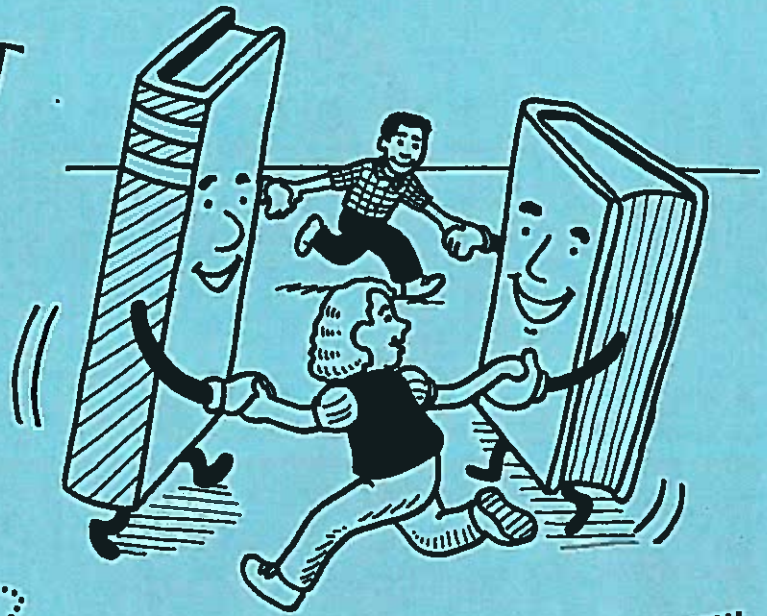
Work on poetry by creating homemade greeting cards. Put your youngster in charge of writing the verses to go inside. She can do this for birthday, anniversary, get-well, and thank-you cards. Help her get ideas by looking through old cards your family has received. Also, you can help her make lists of words that she can use (blue, Sue, new, moo). *Example:* "Roses are red, violets are blue, happy birthday to my Aunt Sue!" Suggest that she fold construction paper in half, write her verse inside, and use markers or crayons to illustrate her card.

12. Family announcements

Your child is probably familiar with morning announcements at school. Together, discuss what they usually contain (results of games or tournaments, schedule for upcoming events). Then, help your youngster write weekly announcements to keep everyone in your house up-to-date. Each Sunday evening, she can post a list on the refrigerator: "Jake's soccer team won on Saturday" or "Mom has a job interview on Monday." *Idea:* Help her make stationery for her announcements on the computer or by hand and add a special heading ("Radcliffe Family News").

Literacy Games

Playing games with words and books can get your child excited about language and boost her reading, writing, and speaking skills. Try these ideas.



Jump and rhyme

Jump rope chants let your youngster enjoy rhythms and rhymes. And while she's jumping and chanting, she's learning to hear the different sounds that make up words—a skill her teacher calls *phonemic awareness*.



Materials: jump rope

1. Say a word that your child could easily rhyme, such as *cat*. She should jump rope and make up a chant using that word and a rhyming one. ("I love my *cat*. How about *that*?")

2. Then, she passes the rope to you. Repeat her lines, copying her rhythm, and add another rhyming line. ("He wears a *hat*.")

3. Go back and forth, repeating the chant and adding to it, until you can't think of another rhyming word. The last person to go chooses a new word to start the next round.

Roll a read-aloud

Use an existing board game to encourage your child to read aloud.

Materials: several short books, a game board with a path (example: *Candy Land*), a token for each player, one die

1. Ask your youngster to pick a book, and have players place their tokens at the beginning of the game path. The youngest person goes first.

2. On his turn, each player rolls the die and reads that many sentences from the book (roll a 5, read 5 sentences). Then, he moves his token that number of spaces (5).

3. Keep playing until someone gets a token all the way to "finish." The winner reads the rest of the book aloud to the other players. *Note:* If you finish the book before someone wins, start a new one.

Act out a story

Play "story charades" to build your child's reading comprehension skills.

Materials: scraps of paper, pencil, bowl

1. Together, write the titles of several familiar books on separate slips of paper. *Examples:* *Corduroy* (Don Freeman), *Green Eggs and Ham* (Dr. Seuss), *Strega Nona* (Tomie dePaola). Fold each slip in half, and place in a bowl.

2. Let your youngster choose a slip and silently act out a scene from the beginning, the middle, and the end of the story—in order. For *Corduroy*, he might pretend he's looking for a button, being chased, and riding on a fox's back.

3. When he's finished, the other players try to guess his story. If no one gets it right, ask your child to perform three new scenes from the book in order again. The first person to name the story acts out the next one.



continued



Tell a tale

Let your youngster stretch her imagination and practice speaking in front of others by making up stories to match pictures.

Materials: coloring book, crayons, stapler

1. Have your child open the coloring book to a random page and use the picture to start telling a story. ("Once upon a time, a duck found a baseball.")
2. Ask her to close the book and pass it to the next person. That person opens to a different page and adds to the story. *Example:* "The duck took the baseball to the amusement park and hid under the merry-go-round."
3. Continue handing the book around and adding to the story until everyone gets a turn. The last person to go should wrap up the story. *Idea:* Let your youngster color the pages you used to tell the tale, tear them out, and staple them together so she can retell the story.

Would you rather...?

This guessing game mixes silly questions with language arts practice.

Materials: index cards, pencil, paper

1. Together, think of 15–20 "Would you rather?" questions, and write them on separate index cards. *Example:* "Would you rather (A) touch a worm or (B) chew a banana peel?" Shuffle the cards and place them facedown in a stack.
2. Give each person two blank index cards to use for voting. They should write A on one card and B on the other.
3. The first player draws a card and reads it aloud. The other players guess which answer that person will pick and then vote by putting their A or B card facedown.



4. The first player reveals his choice and explains why he picked it. Each person who guessed correctly scores a point. Then, it's the next player's turn. Continue until all of the cards are used. The person with the most points wins.

The play-it-smart game guide

Many store-bought games come packed with chances for your youngster to read, spell words, tell stories, and more. Here are some you can play.

Reading

Your child can read questions and answers with games like *Beat The Parents*, *Brain Quest Smart Game*, and *Great States Junior*.

Spelling and vocabulary

Choose games in which players make words to score points. *Examples:* *Boggle Jr.*, *See Spot Spell*, and *Scrabble Junior*.



Writing and storytelling

Encourage your youngster to make up stories or poems by playing *Rory's Story Cubes*, *Tell Tale*, or *Ravensburger Tell A Story*.

Speaking

Games like *Loaded Questions Junior*, *Quelf Jr.*, and *Don't Say It!* throw in laughs as players communicate with each other and share ideas.

Tip: Look for these games at yard sales, swap with neighbors, or ask relatives to hand down ones their kids have outgrown.