

1 Have conversations before, during, and after reading together

These activities are typically appropriate for children in kindergarten through third grade.

Having conversations when reading with children helps them develop higher-level thinking and language skills, such as predicting, problem solving, or contrasting. While reading books aloud, ask the child questions and talk about the content of the story together before, during, and after reading.

- Use open-ended questions to ask the child to think about the book's messages and what is happening. See the box below for examples of questions to ask children when reading different types of books.
- Ask the child to apply the book's messages to the world around him by connecting events to his own life.
- Ask more and more complex questions, so the child continues to build her vocabulary and language skills.

Example questions for informational books
that explain facts about the world, such as books about animals

- Why do birds fly south for winter?
- What would happen if you planted a tree in the desert?
- Why is it important to recycle?



Example questions for narrative books
that are about a series of events, whether fictional or nonfictional, such as stories



- Why did the character do what he did?
- What else could she have done?
- If you were in that story, what would you have done?

What skills will this practice help build?

Having conversations about what they are reading helps children build vocabulary and develop skills using language typically found in school settings. Building their skills to think and connect ideas from many contexts allows children to follow more complex language, which they might find in stories, instructions, and descriptions of historical events or nature.