

RAISING A READER: TIPS FOR YOUR TODDLER VIDEO

Reading aloud to your little one during that critical window of zero to three years old is so important, especially if they're deaf or hard of hearing. Check out part one of this video to hear why it's important you read aloud every day and get some tips that you can start using to become a reading family.

Reading aloud to a busy baby or an active toddler can be tough, and in this video I'm going to give you some tips for reading aloud with your little one to keep their attention and help them love reading with you.

Hi, I'm Dr. Teresa Caraway with Hearing First, we're here to help and support families just like yours who have a child with hearing loss. We want to empower you as your child learns to listen, talk, read and thrive, just like kids with typical hearing.

As a speech language pathologist, a mom and a grandmother, I've had my share of reading aloud to a squirming little toddler. Well, here are some great tips that I turn to every time to spark their interest and keep them engaged as I read aloud and we share books together.

Tip number one, be a drama mama or a dramatic daddy.

Make it so exciting that they can't stay away. Fun voices can help keep their attention. Not sure how to be a drama mama or dramatic daddy, well try using a sing song voice instead of your usual speaking voice.

Tip number two, build anticipation.

The element of surprise works wonders to spark a toddler's interest in what's about to happen next. If they start to squirm or lose attention, pull their interest back in by building anticipation with your voice. Oh wow, look at this. Oh, oh, oh, oh. This is not good. Or, oh, you won't believe what happened next. Then peek over the top of the book to see if you got their attention. Soon they'll be too curious to resist what you're reading and want to get right back with you.

Tip number three, make the story about your child.

Replace characters with your child's name or other family members. For example, instead of Brown Bear, Brown Bear what do you see? You can use their name. Leo, Leo, what do you see? Instead of Goldilocks and the Three Bears it's Liza and the Three Bears. Engage in conversation about the book to connect your child's experiences to the book. For example, oh my goodness, they're at the beach. I remember when we went to the beach. What did you like about going to the beach?

Tip number four, try books with repeatable lines.

Many children's books include sentences and phrases that are repeated, placing emphasis on the rhyme, rhythm and repetition of language. You may be familiar with some popular ones like "Blue Hat,

Green Hat", and "Are You My Mother"? Books with repeatable lines help your child learn about the patterns in spoken language and when you read a book with repeatable lines, stop at various points in the story and provide your child the opportunity to fill in the missing word or phrase. They'll love to predict what comes next and participate and you'll love to see how excited your child is when they have a role to play. There's a list of books with repeatable lines in the description below for you to check out.

Tip number five, turn any book into a flap book.

Little ones love lift the flap books because they create an element of surprise and they're interactive. Plus, for a child with hearing loss, you can use the hear it before they see its strategy and provide ear contact before eye contact. This helps them improve their auditory skill development. The good news is you don't need to buy special flap books because with Post-It Notes, you can turn any book into a flap book. Before you read the book together, cover something of interest on each page with a sticky note. Then as you read, talk to your little one about what is under the Post-It and what the picture might be. Give them clues and talk about it. So if you're reading "The Very Hungry Caterpillar" you could say, I wonder what the Hungry Caterpillar ate next. Can you guess? It's big and red and juicy and goes crunch, crunch, crunch. Whoa, let's see what it is, and then lift the flap together or have your child tear off the sticky note.

I hope these tips help. Remember, reading aloud together is one of the best things you can do for your child, not only for their brain development and to prepare them for school but for those sweet bonding moments you'll have together.

Check out the description below for links for free reading resources you can use and some lists of our favorite books. I would love to know what some of your favorite books are that you love to read. Leave a comment below and let's share with other families and make our own list.

Wherever you are on this journey or however you may be feeling, you are not alone, Hearing First is here to help you every step of the way. Subscribe to the YouTube channel for more helpful videos and visit hearingfirst.org to find more information and support on this journey.