

Storytime Tips

Use these tips to engage children in care through book reading and sharing.

DURING STORY TIME:

- ✓ **Go slow.** Pause for 5-10 seconds after reading each page to give children time to think and discuss.
- ✓ **Routine is important.** Story time should be in the schedule every day to establish a predictable routine and incorporate as much direct literacy work as possible!
- ✓ **Keep it manageable.** Attention spans of the children in your care will vary and it's okay for a child to lose focus for a bit. Designate a maximum of 15 minutes for reading, and 15 minutes for an extension activity.
- ✓ **Share illustrations.** Pictures are often the most accessible part of books for young children. Make sure all children can see the illustrations—this is easiest if you sit with the children and move the book around after reading each page.
- ✓ **Create conversation.** Story time is a great opportunity to increase verbal interaction. It's okay to allow the children to comment on the story or other things that come up—listen and respond to spark interest!
- ✓ **HAVE FUN!** Read with expression and animation. The best way to engage all children and support their motivation to read is to show them you enjoy it too.

Extension Activity Tips

Use these tips to engage children in care during extension activities.

DURING ACTIVITIES:

- ✓ **Encourage** children to talk, give praise, ask questions, listen to their answers, and respond. Doing these five things will invite conversation and remind children that they are respected and valued.
- ✓ **Keep it manageable.** Attention spans of the children in your care will vary and it's okay for a child to lose focus for a bit. Designate a maximum of 15 minutes for one activity and remember it is okay to take breaks, move around, and/or sing songs!
- ✓ **Follow their lead.** It may turn out that some children's attention is elsewhere during the activity. Instead of forcing them to participate, start a conversation based on what they seem interested in!
- ✓ **Create conversation.** While involved in an activity, use every opportunity to talk to the children and get them talking. Narrate what they are doing, encourage them to explain, ask questions, and make connections.
- ✓ **Focus on the process.** Children's artwork may not always come out as expected or go to plan and that's okay! It's much more important that they are engaged, talking, and enjoying the activity.
- ✓ **Revisit the book or toy.** Before starting the activity, re-read the book or revisit the toy, allowing children to retell the story or remember how the toy was used, sharing their favorite parts were and using vocabulary.
- ✓ **HAVE FUN!** Children will be most engaged and enthusiastic if you're enjoying the activity. Don't worry about it going to plan—let the children explore!

Tips for Managing Groups of Children

- ✓ There may be times when not every child wants to participate in an activity. If this happens, you can lead a smaller group in the activity and let others look at a book or toy nearby – they may change their minds!
- ✓ To make turn-taking easier, consider letting each child know when it is their turn with prompts like, “I see a girl whose name begins with M. It’s her turn” and “I see a boy wearing a blue shirt. It’s his turn.”
- ✓ Standing in line is a skill that needs to be taught and practiced. Consider making it a game, inviting children to line up in a certain order and using words like “in front of,” “behind,” and “next to.”
- ✓ If comments from the group become overwhelming, use a stuffed animal or other object to help with turn-taking – whoever has the object can talk.
- ✓ Invite older children to be “special helpers” to younger ones during an activity or story time.

What to Expect with Multi-aged Groups

	Babies (Birth to 1)	Toddlers (1 to 3)	Preschoolers (3 to 5)
They will:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respond to movements, sounds, and gestures • Babble, imitate sounds, produce words • Make gestures and sounds to communicate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask a lot of questions about names for things, cause and effect, etc. • Desire independence • Enjoy answering your questions, following simple directions, and discussing a lot! 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognize letters and numbers • Understand social-emotional cues like taking turns and helping others • Ask a lot of “why” questions
You can:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct comments to them using their names, noises, and gestures • Respond to and extend their sounds • Let them handle materials and experiment with banging them together, dropping, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help them make connections to their own experiences • Be patient—they may get frustrated and will appreciate your sensitive support • Allow them to make decisions, choose how they put things together, what pieces to use 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide opportunities for them to experiment, make new rules, or explain the activity • Ask them to be special helpers for the younger children • Use complex language and provide explanations
With <i>all</i> children in your care: Use a lot of vocabulary, ask questions, and start conversations!			

School readiness:

Having the knowledge and skills to enter kindergarten comfortable, prepared, and ready to learn. Helping children develop skills in the categories below is part of preparing them for school.

Executive function:

A child's ability to take turns, have self-control, concentrate, learn and follow rules, problem solve, remember information, and plan ahead.

Social-emotional development:

A child's ability to identify emotions in themselves and others, socialize, manage strong feelings, express themselves, and develop positive relationships.

Cognitive development:

A child's ability to problem solve, predict, make connections, understand cause and effect, ask questions, learn new skills, and make decisions.

Early literacy:

Skill development around learning to read, talk, write, and listen – this includes understanding and using language, using books, connecting sounds to print, learning the alphabet, drawing, and playing.

Early math:

Learning about sizes, shapes, and patterns; recognizing numbers; counting; spatial awareness; and understanding comparison concepts like big/small, more/less, part/whole, etc.

Fine motor skills:

Use of small muscles (fingers, toes, wrists, mouth) to manipulate objects by pinching, pulling, squeezing, and lacing, in order to later be able to draw, write, type, etc.

Gross motor skills:

Use of large muscles (arms, legs, torso, feet) to crawl, roll, walk, sit, etc.
