

How to do Storytime at Home

A Kindergarten Readiness Outreach Workshop



Early Literacy Focus

Reading together helps children develop a life-long love of learning and books. Library staff can help families find books that parents and children will enjoy, and talk about ways to keep a child's attention and keep them involved. Parents can make storytime at home more meaningful and help their children develop early literacy skills by adding a few simple techniques to their storytime routine.

The Program

This is a workshop for the whole family to engage in a fun activity that also helps caregivers learn techniques for making storytime an enriching experience for children.

Overview

Activity	Focus	Time
Introduction	Share Research	5 min
Book	Select a wordless book to share. Demonstrate how to use visual clues to tell a story and practice using language.	10 min
Group Activity: Make a list	Make a list of questions you can ask about a book when you are reading together at home.	10 min
Family Activity: Using Voices	Practice creating different voices for different characters	10 min
Family Activity: Practice storytime	Read 2 books together – one nonfiction and one with a repeated phrase	15 min
Family Activity: Make a routine	When you get home, what will be your storytime routine? How will you hold yourself accountable?	5 min
Wrap Up	Reflect and Goal Set	5 min

The Details

Introduction

Welcome participants and deliver the following messages:

- This is a program for the entire family
- We will talk about different ways that you can make storytime a fun, daily routine
 - We will brainstorm different questions that you can ask each other when you are reading books together
 - We will practice using voices to make characters in picture books more fun
 - We will talk about how to choose great books and establish a workable storytime routine

- Everything we do today is something you can continue to do at home
- YOU are your child’s best teacher, and doing things together helps your child learn

Book

Sharing a book is a great way to introduce a concept to the group and model reading aloud to adults. Select a wordless book from your library to share with the group. Wordless books are a natural match to dialogic reading because they encourage conversation and questions. Check out the book list below for ideas and recommendations. You may want to remind attendees that reading together doesn’t have to be in English – using a family’s first language can be a more engaging experience. It’s also a good idea to offer wordless books or books with just a few words for adults with low reading levels.

Share Research

Below are several different research-based comments to share during this program. Choose one or two that you would like to focus on, and practice saying them out loud in your own words before the workshop. As you move through the different activities in the workshop, find ways to share the comments. All of these comments are based on Every Child Ready to Read (ECRTR) research and were written by early childhood expert Saroj Ghoting for the Idaho Commission for Libraries’ long-running ECRTR workshops.

Group Activity: Make a List

Supplies needed:

- A large piece of paper or white board
- Markers

Have the group brainstorm different types of questions for children and caregivers to ask each other during storytime at home. You may want to share some information about dialogic reading (from research below) and prompt them with questions about pictures, what is going to happen next, what happened that was unexpected, etc. Write the group’s questions down on a large piece of paper or a white board, and encourage caregivers to take a picture of the questions with their phones before they leave.

As you are wrapping up, deliver these messages:

- Giving children the opportunity to tell you about a book or ask questions, helps them develop narrative skills and try out new vocabulary, both of which are important early literacy skills
- Reading is enjoyable when everyone is engaged in the process – encourage questions and take time to answer

Family Activity: Using Voices

Supplies needed:

- Picture books from your library’s collection with lots of dialogue for practice (like the Piggy & Elephant books)
- Puppets from your library (optional)

Giving the characters in picture books different voices can make the reading experience fun and engaging. Give a few tips on creating different voices, and then let families practice together using books from your library and puppets (puppets optional).

Tips for Doing Voices

- Play with pitch – try a really high voice or a really low voice, a really fast voice or a very slow voice.
- Play with volume – a booming voice or a whispery voice.
- Try an accent – British, French, Southern, Western, Pirate.
- Pretend to be someone you know or a celebrity.
- Don't be afraid to act silly!

As this activity is wrapping up, deliver these messages:

- Using voices can help capture a child's attention and make reading together enjoyable.
- Children who enjoy being read to, are more likely to want to learn to read themselves.

Family Activity: Practice Storytime

Supplies needed:

Non-fiction books from your library's collection that would be good for family storytime (try to bring books on a variety of topics)

Picture books with repeated phrases from your library's collection (try to choose shorter books for the sake of time)

A large piece of paper or white board

Markers

During this activity, families will practice doing a storytime with two types of books: one non-fiction and one picture book with a repeated phrase. Pass out books to the families and offer a few tips for reading both types of books. You may want to write these on a large post-it ahead before the program starts.

Tips for Reading Non-Fiction Books

- Find books that are interesting to your kids – books about construction vehicles, dinosaurs, unicorns – whatever they are interested in.
- You don't have to read the whole book – flip through it and talk about the pictures and read the parts that are interesting to your child.
- Try to use non-fiction to introduce a new vocabulary word or two and use it during your daily routine.
- It can take children longer to process what they have heard – wait for kids to ask questions or tell you about what they know.

Tips for Reading Picture Books with Repeated Phrases

- Ask your child to say the repeated phrase with you.
- Look for clues in the pictures or font of the text for when the repeated phrase occurs and point these out as you read.

- Try to predict what will happen as you read the book together.

During this activity, circulate among the families and offer advice or encouragement as needed. They may not have time to read both books, so try to let them read a little bit of each book. As things are wrapping up, deliver these messages:

- Giving children the chance to ask questions, talk about books, and use new words improves their vocabulary and narrative skills.
- Finding patterns in books that have repeated phrases is an important early literacy and early math skill.
- Taking turns when talking helps children develop better executive function and practice vocabulary.

Family Activity: Make a Routine

Supplies needed:

Family Storytime Plan worksheet

Pens

A hard surface to write on (can use the books from the previous activity)

Handout on choosing books (from ICfL)

Take a few minutes as a family to discuss what your storytime routine should be and fill out the Family Storytime Routine worksheet.

Some things to think about when you are making decisions about family storytimes:

- When to do storytime (right before bed, after dinner, etc.)
- How long should it be?
- How many books should we do?
- Who gets to choose the books?
- If you have more than one child – will you do multiple storytimes, or do one together?
- Which adult reads the books? The same person every time, switch it up?
- Can older siblings read too?

Wrap Up

As the program is wrapping up, deliver the following messages:

- Today your family came together to learn about ways to strengthen your storytime routine. Enjoying family storytime is important for helping children become readers later.
- When we read a wordless book and brainstormed questions to ask during storytime, we improved your understanding of dialogic reading techniques, which can help children develop narrative skills and vocabulary.
- We played with different character voices as a way to make reading books fun and engaging.
- You had the chance to practice a couple of different types of books and get feedback on how to integrate those into your storytimes.
- Finally, we established a family storytime routine. This is key to making storytime work and routines help children know what to expect, which aids their executive function development.

- Check out the Vroom tip cards in your child’s school supply kit for more ideas on reading together.

As a final activity, give adult participants the parent survey to fill out and return to you. Give children the Storytime at Home Kids Reflection Activity to work on while their grown-ups are filling out the survey.

Return completed adult surveys to Jennifer Redford at ICfL:

- Scan and email them to: jennifer.redford@libraries.idaho.gov
- Mail them to Jennifer’s Attention at ICfL: 325 W. State St., Boise, ID, 83702
- **Remember to count** the number of kids and adults who attend your program – you will need those numbers for your Summary Report

Supplies

Non-fiction books from your library’s collection that would be good for storytime at home

Picture books with repeated phrases from your library’s collection

Picture books from your library’s collection with dialog

Large piece of paper or white board

Markers

Family Storytime Plan worksheet (download)
Pens

Handout on choosing books (ICfL)

Dialogic Reading Brochure (ICfL)

Books

“A Ball for Daisy” by Chris Raschka

“Chalk” by Bill Thomson

“Flashlight” by Lizi Boyd

“Flotsam” by David Wiesner

“Good Dog Carl” by Alexandra Day

“Good Night, Gorilla” by Peggy Rathman

“The Lion and the Mouse” by Jerry Pinkney

“Found” by Jeff Newman

Research-Based Comments to Adults

***Select a few of these comments to share with the group as they are doing the activities in the workshop.**

The Importance of Reading to Children

A child’s interest in reading is an important predictor of later reading achievement.

The early years are a critical time to develop children’s vocabulary. To be ready to learn to read, most children need to have about 15,000 words in their listening vocabulary. That means they need to understand the meaning of about 15,000 words when they hear them. The best way to help children develop a large vocabulary is to talk and read with them.

There are many ways we can share books with young children. Because they like to hear the same book over and over again, you have many opportunities to share the book in different ways, each one supporting different pre-reading skills. Having a child listen to the story with few interruptions develops their listening skills, while doing a book picture walk/dialogic reading develops their narrative skills, which helps them later understand what they read. Shared book reading helps them internalize the rhythm and words of the author which helps them understand how stories work and their structure work.

Books have many more rare words than we use in normal conversation with young children. Rare words are those that are not used very often. However, children’s picture books have about three times as many rare words as we use in daily conversation; so when we read books with young children they are hearing more different words than they would just by listening to us. Reading books together is one good way to develop your child’s vocabulary.

Using Wordless Books

Helps to build children’s listening and speaking skills (oral language skills)—children are listening to what you (the adult) is saying about the pictures and children are saying their own ideas about what is happening in the pictures.

Develops a child’s narrative skills because you are encouraging the child to tell the story

Builds vocabulary when you (the adult) add more words to what the child says. Purposely adding words, synonyms or descriptive words that your child is not familiar with builds their vocabulary in a natural way. [Role play is an example of this with the book you have chosen.]

Encourages creative and critical thinking which helps with comprehension.

Dialogic Reading and Interactive Reading

Read the title and author of the book and talk about the pictures, do not read the text. Demonstrate using of “what?” questions, open-ended questions, making connections to children’s experiences, allowing children to speak up, extending what they say, adding some new vocabulary words to what they say, asking what might happen next. Point out that you are not reading the text, but talking about the pictures.

Shared reading is valuable because your child has your full attention, and you are enjoying the experience together.

Shared reading develops a love of reading and an appreciation of books. Children who enjoy being read to, are more likely to want to learn to read themselves.

No matter what your child’s age, reading together with your child—or shared reading—is the single most important activity that you can do to help your child get ready to read.

Books are a wonderful way to spend time talking and learning new words. As you read a story, stop and consider interesting words—have a conversation about them. Let your child have the opportunity to ask questions and make comments. It is the interaction with you that makes reading so special and important.

Children learn many more new words from books than they do from everyday conversation. Hearing these “rare” or less common words is very important to developing a large vocabulary. Remember, knowing many words means a child will be better prepared to learn to read.

As you talk and explain what a new word means, you help your child increase vocabulary and general background knowledge. This will help your child understand more when he or she begins to read.

Predictable books, books that have a repeated phrase or pattern, engage children in “reading” before they actually learn to read as you have children repeat the phrase.

Predictable books encourage reading together as children will repeat the easily learned patterns with you as you read.

When you come to a predictable line, use your voice and hand motions to encourage your child to read along with you. They are learning how stories work and are enjoying reading with you.

Using Non-fiction or Factual Books

Children are naturally curious about the world around them and like to find out information about the world.

When we share factual information with children, we help build their knowledge which will later help them understand what they read when they read about these topics in school.

It is fun to share factual books with children because you can add information on the topic that YOU know and you can encourage children to tell you what they know and to ask questions as you discover together.

If they ask you a question and you don’t know the answer, it is something you can discuss or try to find out together.

Non-fiction or factual books are a great way to learn new words, as well as new information. These books often have more complex vocabulary than other books. This helps children become more word conscious and interested in learning even more words.

Children keep building on what they already know, so the more they know about the world by the time they enter school, the easier it is for them to learn more. But quizzing children on facts might dampen their desire to learn. By reading books on topics of interest and sharing the information you know, you can keep learning exciting so they will want to learn more.

Many children are more interested in factual books than in storybooks. It is important to read both kinds of books. Be sure to have factual books available even if you don’t read them from cover to cover.

Reading at Home Together is Important

Developing early literacy skills now will make it easier for your child to learn to read when he or she starts school.

Remember, your home is a learning zone. You don't need expensive toys. What your child needs is YOU! You to guide them as they learn about their world, as they learn about writing, and print and letters, as well as stories you tell and read.

There are many ways you can support pre-reading skills as you talk with your children throughout the day. The little things you take time to do, purposely using big words, taking time to listen what your child has to say, taking time to tell your child a story or talk about what you are doing as you are cooking, they all add up to stronger language for your child before they get to school and are formally taught to read.

When you share books with children you can point to the words in the title or in a repeated phrase. This helps them understand that you are reading the words, not the pictures. As they see that the written words are the words we say, they are gaining print awareness which they need to learn to read.

You can mention the title, the author and the illustrator of the book, and what the author and illustrator do for the book. Children are learning how books work.

Sometimes words in books or on signs are written in interesting letters that help us understand the meaning of the word or how to say it (look for big, thick letters and quietly for tiny letters, for example.) Pointing out that you are getting an idea of how to read the word from the way it looks on the page helps children develop print awareness.

Don't worry if you don't get through a whole book at one sitting. Do your best to make the book enjoyable for your child, making sure she has your full attention. If it doesn't seem to be working, listen to what your child is thinking about and see if you can be more interactive around the book. If it still doesn't work, put the book away and read it again or try a different book later.

We are always here to help you find ways you and your children can enjoy reading together. We can help you find books you and your children will enjoy, talk about ways to keep their attention, and ways to keep them involved. We love to hear what you do with your children as you help them learn.