

## - Child development

# Reading aloud a benefit to children of all ages

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Reading aloud to children is one of the joys of parenting. All children, whether they're infants, toddlers or school-aged, can benefit from being read to, and parents whose youngsters have grown up often look back on story time as some of their favorite moments as moms and dads.



Reading aloud to children is about more than just establishing a bond between parent and child. According to Reading Rockets, a national public media literacy initiative, children as young as infants can benefit from being read to. Infants can look at pictures as their parents point to them and say the names of the various objects within them.

By drawing attention to the pictures and associating words with them and realworld objects, parents are helping infants learn the importance of language.

Kids of all ages can benefit from being read to, even after they learn to read on their own. The following are a handful of ways that reading aloud to children can benefit them.

**Reading to children dramatically expands their vocabulary**

A 2019 study published in the *Journal of Developmental and Behavioral Pediatrics* found that young children whose parents read them five books a day enter kindergarten having heard roughly 1.4 million more words than kids who were never read to. The disparity is even significant when comparing kids who are periodically read to each day with kids who are read five books per day.

Children who are read to daily may hear slightly less than 300,000 words prior to entering kindergarten, while those read five books per day will hear more than 1.4 million words.

**Reading to children expands their imaginations**

The Northern Virginia Family Services reports that research has shown that children who activate their imaginations through being read to develop higher activity in the area of their brain that's responsible for cultivating mental images and deciphering and comprehending verbal cues. That heightened activity bolsters youngsters' imaginations and instills in them a greater fondness for reading.

**Reading can help kids learn to focus**

Parents of young children no doubt know that such youngsters rarely sit still for any significant length of time. However, when being read to, young children, even those who are initially reluctant to engage in story time, will learn to sit still for the duration of the book. That can help them learn to focus, a benefit that will pay dividends when children begin school.

**Reading to children can speak to their interests or emotional needs**

Reading Rockets notes that children's favorite stories may speak to their emotional needs and interests. That's why so many youngsters insist on reading a favorite book over and over again. Though that's often boring for parents, it can benefit youngsters, who will eventually move on to other books.