

Family Reading – It’s Time to Share

It is important that grandparents understand the concepts of family reading in order to strengthen their families’ reading and literacy skills. Family reading will also help grandchildren develop a love of learning and a love of reading.

Take a moment and think back to when you were a child. Do you remember a family member, or someone who cared about you, taking the time to read to you? What was your favorite childhood story or book? Was reading important to you and your family? Research tells us it is important to pass a love of reading on to our children and grandchildren. There are several ways you can develop the skills needed to pass on a love for reading to your grandchildren.

Talking sensitively with infants and small children to prepare them to become readers is key. Long before a child has any idea about the alphabet, grandparents can prepare children to read. The most important way to prepare them is to talk with them. This draws children into active interaction.

Another key to passing on the love of reading is to fill your life with learning. Keep the books that you most love in places where you can use them. Check good books out of the library for you and your grandchildren. Use books, magazines and educational websites to continue learning. Talk about the things you are learning. Try to think of some other ways you could continue learning.

Another way to pass on a love for reading is to make reading fun for your grandchildren. Let the children select books from the library. Read to your grandchildren regularly. Read to them in fun places – maybe the attic or a closet or a favorite rocker. When we read to children, we can bring excitement and fun to the story. When a child wants to linger on a page, we can take time to talk about the words, pictures, characters, etc. Be careful not to turn reading into a

forced activity: children may resist. If we make reading fun, they will seek it. Think back on what made reading fun for you and try it with your grandchild.

When passing on our love for reading, we must remember to give children choices. They like to be involved in making decisions for their lives. For example:

- We can help them find the right section at the library and then let them pick out books.
- We can let them pick the books that we will read to them at bedtime.
- We can let them turn pages.
- We can let them guide us to what they are interested in.

Make times and places for learning. Maybe once a week you can make an outing with your grandchildren to an interesting place such as a museum, historic site, a business or any place new and interesting. Can you think of an interesting place to take your grandchildren?



We also show our love of reading when we make a place in our homes for books, bookshelves and other learning materials. The child who grows up seeing and experiencing the adventure of reading and learning is likely to develop a rich love of learning. Remember the person who influenced each of us as children to enjoy reading.

Tips to Encourage Family Reading

- **Read to and with your grandchildren for 30 minutes every day.** It is very important to read out loud to children before they start school. Help your grandchildren to read with you. Ask them to find letters and words on the page and talk with them about the story.
- **Talk with infants and young children before they learn to read.** Talk with your grandchildren all day long, using short, simple sentences. Talking with them even before they can speak will help them later when they learn to read and write.
- **Help your grandchildren to read on their own.** Reading at home helps children do better in school. Have lots of children's books in your home and visit the library every week. Help your grandchildren get their own library cards and let them pick out their own books.
- If your grandchild has a developmental delay, he or she may find reading frustrating. **Have books on tape in your home.** Borrow or buy a tape player that is easy to work. If you cannot find recordings of your grandchild's favorite books, you or a family member could make recordings of them for the child to listen to while looking at the books.
- **Help your grandchild to see that reading is important.** Suggest reading as a free-time activity. Make sure children have time in their day to read.
- **Set up a reading area in your home.** Keep books that interest your grandchildren in places where they can easily reach them. As they become better readers, make sure you add harder books to your collection.
- **Give your grandchildren writing materials.** Children want to learn how to write and to practice writing. Help them learn by having paper, pencils, pens or crayons for them in your home. Help your grandchildren write if they ask you. If the child has a special learning or physical need, regular pens and pencils may not be the best choice. Ask your pediatrician or people who work with your grandchild at school or at the child care center to suggest other writing materials the child can use.
- **Read and write with your grandchildren in their native language.** Practicing their first language will help your children learn to read and write English.
- **Talk with your grandchildren as you do daily activities together.** When you take your grandchildren places, talk with them about what you are doing and ask them questions. If your grandchild cannot hear, use whatever form of communication the child usually uses.
- **Ask your grandchildren to describe events in their lives.** Talking about their experiences makes children think about them. Giving detailed descriptions and telling complete stories also helps children learn about how stories are written and what the stories they read mean.
- **Restrict the amount and kind of TV your grandchildren watch.** Watch educational TV programs with the children that teach letter sounds and words or give information about nature and science.
- **Keep track of your grandchildren's progress in school.** Visit your grandchildren's classrooms to learn how they are doing in school and how you can help them become better students. Ask about the school's reading program and where your grandchildren need help.

Reference

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