



GUIDE ON **Dialogic Reading** FOR PARENTS AND PROFESSIONALS

“*Reading regularly with young children is important and should be enjoyable.*”



What is dialogic reading?

- ▶ Dialogic reading is an interactive method of reading whereby adults (e.g., parents, guardians, educators, teachers) encourage children to talk about a book and offer them feedback.
- ▶ Adults read with rather than to children. They help children take the lead and become the storytellers.
- ▶ It is important to read with children from an early age, to do so frequently, and to make it an enjoyable activity.



“*Dialogic reading is an interactive reading method..*”

Why is dialogic reading important?



Many studies have shown that dialogic reading develops children's oral language (e.g. vocabulary, fluency, listening comprehension), narrative skills, and early literacy skills.

Early literacy skills are skills, knowledge, and attitudes that help children read and write and predict their later competences in reading and writing.

Dialogic reading promotes positive associations with reading and increases children's interest in books and their motivation to read.

“*Dialogic reading promotes language development and early literacy skills.*”

What is my role in dialogic reading?



BEFORE THE READING

Select age-appropriate books that have suitable and interesting content and use appropriate language.

- ▶ Select books that are tactile, catch the eye, and encourage children to interact with the books. **Pictures should be clear**, carry enough detail and relate to the text.
- ▶ **Books should include characters and topics that children can relate to.** Be alert to stereotypical or discriminatory representations. Multilingualism and cultural diversity should be represented as the norm.

In order to engage children in reading, choose a **familiar environment** where you are not disturbed. Pay attention to the children's attention span and interest.



DURING THE READING

What can you do to promote children's language development during dialogic reading?

- ▶ Use **mime and gestures** when reading to help children understand the story. Adapt the text to suit children's abilities.
- ▶ Read **with expression** and allow pauses to give children time to react.
- ▶ Help children **connect the story** with their own experiences and prior knowledge.

- ▶ In the event of children speaking several languages, draw on their **home languages** when necessary while avoiding systematic translations.
- ▶ Interact with the children by **asking questions** and providing feedback.

What can you do to promote the children's early literacy skills during dialogic reading?

- ▶ Encourage children aged 6-12 months to hold the books, turn the pages, and play with the mobile elements.
- ▶ Ask children **aged 1 and above** to label pictures and relate pictures and text to each other. While reading, slide your finger underneath the words or point out the words you read.



AFTER THE READING

- ▶ Children enjoy hearing the **same story** again. When you read it again, have them participate more intensively.
- ▶ Ensure children have access to the books you read so they can "read" them **on their own**.
- ▶ Encourage children to talk and **think about the book**, for example when drawing or acting out the story.



How do I interact with children during dialogic reading?

While you read, observe the children's non-verbal reactions, and carefully listen to them speaking. React to children by asking questions, feeding back on their utterances, and expanding these to model rich language. In this way, children hear utterances that are slightly more complex than those they are able to produce on their own.

The strategies are illustrated in the example below and further explained in the text.

The adult and the child are looking at the book *Brown bear, brown bear, what do you...?* by Bill Martin Jr. and Eric Carle (1967).

Adult

The blue horse sees an animal as well.

Incitation

Child

Frog. Coax, coax.

Yes, a frog. Feedback
It croaks. Expansion

It's green.
Il saute.

You are right, it jumps. Feedback | Translation
A frog jumps very far. Expansion

Jumps.
Repetition



Adult

Where does it jump to?
What do you think? **Closed question**

Child

Points to
the purple cat:
Cat.

Yes, it sees a cat and says,
I see a purple cat. **Completion prompt**

Looking
at me.

“

Do you think the frog jumps because it's afraid of
the purple cat? **Expansion | Open-ended question**

QUESTIONS

To encourage interaction, adapt prompts and questions to the children's ages and abilities.

- ▶ Completion prompts encourage infants to engage with the book. Ask them to point to an illustration, touch something, or complete a question such as “*Brown bear, brown bear, what do you...?*”
- ▶ “Wh-” questions (who, what, where, when, why, and how) elicit more developed answers. Children aged 2-3 can answer simple questions such as “*Which animal does the bear see?*”. Children from the age of 3 can answer “*why?*” and “*how?*” questions which prompt them to make connections and interpret the text and the illustrations.
- ▶ Open-ended questions differ from closed questions which allow for only one correct answer (“*What colour is the duck?*”). Open-ended questions require children to explain something and provide a more in-depth response. Questions such as “*How do you think the children feel?*” and “*How could the story have ended differently?*” encourage children to engage with the feelings and motivations of the characters or think of alternative endings.
- ▶ Recall prompts require children from age 4 to verbalize information they recall.
Example: “*What happened in the story when...?*”
- ▶ Distancing prompts encourage children aged 4 and above to relate the content of the book with their own experiences or general knowledge.
Example: “*The children in the book see a lot of different animals. When have you seen many animals?*”



“ Eager to say
a new word.

FEEDBACK

Confirm correct answers and reformulate sentences when utterances are not correct (corrective feedback).

Example: A child points to the frog and names it correctly. You confirm “Yes, the frog.” When the child offers the words “il saute”, you can confirm the answer and provide a translation.

EXPANSION

Rephrase utterances using a richer vocabulary and a more complex sentence structure, or give greater detail.

Example: When the child imitates the sound of the frog, saying “coax, coax”, you can supplement the right word “it croaks.” You can also add information such as how far frogs jump.

REPETITION

Children may repeat the word “jump”, eager to produce a new word. If they do not attempt to say it, you can repeat the word or encourage them to pronounce it.

Further reading

Project Collaboration with parents and development of multiliteracies in early childhood education (COMPARE): <https://compare.uni.lu>

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