

# An Effective Way to Read to Preschoolers: Dialogic Reading

**Dialogic Reading helps children become actively involved in reading books.**

Children learn most from books when they are actively involved and **Dialogic Reading helps the child become the teller of the story.** The adult becomes the listener, the questioner, the audience for the child.

**Dialogic Reading encourages the adult & child to interact using “PEER”:**

**Prompt** the child to say something about the book.

**Evaluate** the child's response.

**Expand** the child's response by rephrasing/adding information to it.

**Repeat** the prompt to make sure the child has learned from the expansion.

*Example:*

Imagine that the parent and the child are looking at the page of a book that has a picture of a fire engine on it. The parent says, "What is this?" (the prompt) while pointing to the fire truck. The child says, *truck*, and the parent follows with "That's right (the evaluation); it's a red fire truck (the expansion); can you say *fire truck*?" (the repetition).

Except for the first reading of a book to children, PEER sequences should occur on nearly every page. Sometimes you can read the written words on the page and then prompt the child to say something. For many books, you should do less and less reading of the written words in the book each time you read it. Leave more to the child.

**Five Types of Prompts** used in dialogic reading to begin PEER sequences – **CROWD.**

## **Completion Prompts**

Leave a blank at the end of a sentence and get the child to fill it in. These are typically used in books with rhyme or books with repetitive phrases. For example, you might say, "I think I'd be a glossy cat. A little plump but not too \_\_\_\_\_," letting the child fill in the blank with the word *fat*..

## **Recall Prompts**

Ask questions about what happened in a book a child has already read. Recall prompts work for nearly everything except alphabet books. For example, you might say, "Can you tell me what happened to the little blue engine in this story?" Recall prompts help children in understanding story plot and in describing sequences of events.

## **Open-Ended Prompts**

Prompts that focus on the pictures in books. They work best for books that have rich, detailed illustrations. For example, while looking at a page in a book that the child is familiar with, you might say, "Tell me what's happening in this picture."

## **Wh- Prompts**

Prompts that usually begin with what, where, when, why, and how questions and focus on the pictures in books. For example, you might say, "What's the name of this?" while pointing to an object in the book. Wh- questions teach children new vocabulary.

## **Distancing Prompts**

Asking children to relate the pictures or words in the book they are reading to experiences outside the book. For example, while looking at a book with a picture of animals on a farm, you might say something like, "Remember when we went to the animal park last week. Which of these animals did we see there?" Distancing prompts help children form a bridge between books and the real world, as well as helping with verbal fluency, conversational abilities, and narrative skills.

## **A Technique That Works**

**Dialogic reading works. Children who have been read to dialogically are substantially ahead of children who have been read to traditionally on tests of language development! Children can jump ahead by several months in just a few weeks of dialogic reading.**

Dialogic reading is just children and adults having a conversation about a book. Children will enjoy dialogic reading more than traditional reading as long as you mix-up your prompts with straight reading, vary what you do from reading to reading, and follow the child's interest. Keep it light. Don't push children with more prompts than they can handle happily. *Keep it fun.*

*Adapted from: **Dialogic Reading: An Effective Way to Read to Preschoolers** by Grover J. (Russ) Whitehurst, Ph.D., Director, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education.*