

Read-Alouds & Dialogic Reading

Reading aloud with your child is a simple and powerful way to build language and literacy skills. When you pause to talk before, during, and after a story, reading becomes a conversation that helps your child understand new words and ideas.

During a **read-aloud**, you pause to talk about the story, helping your child understand what is happening and connect it to their own experiences. Part of any read-aloud is also *thinking* out loud. You are modeling how a skilled reader thinks. Children learn a lot from hearing the connections and questions good readers make in their heads. Use the steps below to guide your reading time with your child before, during, and after a book.

Dialogic reading is a special way of reading aloud that builds on this routine. It uses simple questions and prompts to help your child become an active reader. Instead of just listening, they talk more about the story while you listen, respond, and build on what they say. Strategies like PEER and CROWD give you specific ways to ask questions, support your child's ideas, and keep the conversation going.

These strategies are widely used in early childhood research and classrooms. They support young children, students with disabilities, struggling readers, and English learners by encouraging them to talk, think, and build language during reading.

The PEER Strategy

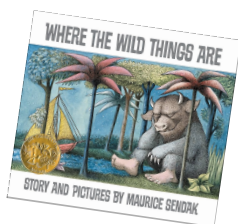
Use PEER anytime you pause during a read-aloud. It turns a simple question into a back-and-forth that builds your child's vocabulary, comprehension, and confidence, and it only takes a minute or two.

Or, go further with **PEER+PA**! Add two quick steps to celebrate their effort and make real-world connections:

- **Praise:** Acknowledge their thinking
- **Apply:** Connect the ideas to their life or the real world

(P) Max is wearing his wolf costume and chasing the dog. Why do you think he's doing that?

Because he wants to be wild!



(E) You're right, he's being wild! (E) And the book has a word for that: mischief. Mischief means doing things that cause trouble on purpose. (R) So why does Max keep making mischief?

Maybe he likes it? Or he wants attention?

(P) That's really good thinking. (A) What do you do when you want someone to notice you?



Read-Aloud Routine

1

Before.

- Look at the book's cover, title, and art
- Talk about what the story might be about
- Connect to what your child already knows

2

During.

- Pause occasionally to talk about the story
- Ask your child what they are thinking
- Respond to their ideas and add to them

3

After.

- Talk about the main ideas and summarize
- Make connections to the story
- Discuss what you've learned or remember

P

Prompt

Ask your child a question about the story

E

Evaluate

Acknowledge what they said and repeat their idea

E

Expand

Add a new word or information to what they said

R

Repeat

Ask the question again using the new word or idea



(P) Jack wants to stop and write everything down, but Annie wants to explore. Why do you think they're reacting differently?

Because Jack is scared and Annie is brave?

(E) That's a good observation! (E) It could also be about how they think. Jack takes careful notes, which is called being methodical. Methodical means doing things in a careful, step-by-step way. (R) So why might being methodical actually be useful in this situation?

So you don't forget things? Or so you stay safe?

(P) Yeah! (A) Can you think of a situation when you are methodical?

The CROWD Strategy

CROWD gives you a way to vary the kinds of questions you ask when reading together. Some types help children learn new words, others build comprehension, and others help make connections to real life. You don't need to use all five at once! You can also use CROWD with PEER! Think of a CROWD question to use as your Prompt, then let PEER guide the conversation.

Completion

Start a sentence and let your child fill in the missing word

Recall

Ask your child to remember something from the story

Open-Ended

Invite your child to share information from the story.

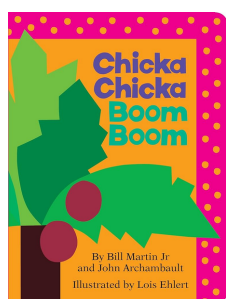
Wh-Questions

Ask what, where, when, why, and how questions.

Distancing

Help your child connect the story to their experiences.

Wh-words like "what" and "why" can appear in any prompt type, that's okay! What makes the Wh-Question row special is that those questions have a specific answer you're looking for from the story.



Completion

A told B and B told C, "I'll meet you at the top of the coconut ____?"

Recall

What happened when the letters climbed to the top of the tree?

Open-Ended

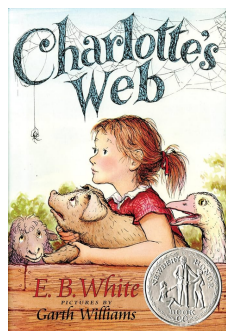
Look at all the letters piled up. What do you notice?

Wh-Questions

Who came to help the letters after they all fell down?

Distancing

When did a situation not go the way you planned?



Completion

The animals looked up and read the words "Some..."

Recall

What did the farmer's family do when they saw Charlotte's web?

Open-Ended

What do you think Wilbur was thinking when he saw the web?

Wh-Questions

Why did Charlotte decide to write words in her web to help Wilbur?

Distancing

Has someone ever done something unexpectedly kind for you?

CROWD-HS is a variation that adds *Home* and *School* as two helpful themes for your Distancing questions. Some prompts are easier than others. Completion, Open-Ended, and Wh- questions work well for younger children. Recall and Distancing can be more challenging, since they ask children to remember details or make connections beyond the story.

More Tips for Reading Together

- Plan your questions ahead of time! Then, mark pages with sticky notes to remind yourself where to pause or ask a question.
- For some questions, let your child respond in different ways. They could point to a picture or sentence, pick between two choices, or act out their answer.
- Build a daily reading routine (same time, same place) so reading becomes a comfortable and expected part of the day.
- Not every read-aloud needs to be structured. Following your child's lead and enjoying the story together is also part of building a love of reading!



Repeated Reading

Reading the Same Book Again? **Good!**

Rereading a book is valuable. Each time through, your child notices new details, reinforces vocabulary from the story, and builds fluency. Try new CROWD or PEER prompts on each read and invite your child to retell parts of the story in their own words.