

 Early Reading

# Dialogic Reading: Getting the Most out of Picture Books

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You've just cozied up with your child for another session of story time and out comes their favorite book. While your instinct might be to reach for a new book, there are actually so many benefits to reading your child's favorite story over and over again!

The trick to rereading a picture book is to make it **interactive**.

Children generally learn best through social interactions where they engage with a partner (you!). A trusted method for reading picture books, known as dialogic reading (Whitehurst et al., 1988), turns your child into an **active participant** in understanding the story rather than a **passive listener**. This method is well known for boosting oral language skills, such as vocabulary and comprehension, among early readers of various abilities and ages.

## How does dialogic reading work?

Dialogic reading views each page of the story as an opportunity to engage your child in conversation. The key technique for doing so is described in the PEER sequence, which represents a short interaction between an adult and a child. Let's take a page from Noggin's original interactive book, *The Princess the Dragon, and the...Dentist?!*, as an example of how you might implement the PEER sequence. On one page, Princess Zooli is shown cleaning plaque from a dragon's mouth!

**Prompt** the child to to say something about the story

- You might say, "What's this?" as you point to a dragon tooth

**Evaluate** the child's response, acknowledging what they said and giving feedback

- Your child might say "tooth," which you evaluate: "That's right! It's a tooth!"

**Expand** on the child's response by rephrasing it or adding to it

- You can expand by saying, "This one is a *dragon* tooth!"

**Repeat** the original prompt to see if the child picked up new information from the *expand* step

- You end with "So, what is this?" as you point to the dragon tooth

Don't forget to praise your child at the end for a job well done.

## Using Prompts

You'll notice that the short interaction starts with a question. Here are 5 types of prompts which you can use:

**Wh- prompts include who, what, when, where, and how questions.** You can use these types of questions to ask your child about a detail in the illustration. These work great for focusing on new vocabulary words because they can be answered with one word, like the example above: "What's this?"

**Completion prompts start the sentence and give your child the chance to add the last word** - "Zooli put her baby tooth under her\_\_\_". These prompts work well once your child is familiar with the story and are especially good for books that have repetitive language like rhyming books.

**Open-ended questions encourage your child to really flex their oral language skills.** These questions should be about the illustration, but don't have a single word response. They can be as broad as "what is happening in the picture?" or as specific as "What's wrong with the dragon's teeth?"


**Recall prompts are great for letting your child show you what they remember about the story.** Once you've read the book a few times, try asking your child what happens on a specific page or even "what" happens next?".

**Distancing: These questions relate parts of the story or vocabulary words to your child's life.** You might ask your child how they clean their teeth or if they remember their last visit to the dentist. These questions help relate the story to the real world.

## Additional Tips

- Follow your child's lead.** Ask questions about words or details that your child is particularly interested in.
- A single interaction on a page is good enough.** It can be fairly short or it can become a long conversation. Just go with it.
- Start with simpler Wh- and completion questions** and work your way up to more complex open-ended, recall, and distancing prompts.
- Use prompts** to expand on words your child might already know and build comprehension for ones they don't know yet.
- Finishing the book isn't all that important.** Getting caught up in talking with your child about the story is way more important than getting through it.
- You can read less of a story as you reread it more and more.** Instead, ask your child more questions that get them to tell you the story.
- Come up with new questions** during each reading. There are so many unique words, fun details, and interesting elements in picture books that you can ask about.

Check out Noggin's original interactive book, *The Princess the Dragon, and the...Dentist?!*, for a fun story with plenty of dialogic reading prompt examples that you can use with your child.



**Read *The Princess, the Dragon, and the...Dentist?!* in Noggin!**

[Read in App](#)

## Citations

Whitehurst, G. J., Falco, F. L., Lonigan, C. J., Fischel, J. E., DeBaryshe, B. D., Valdez-Menchaca, M. C., & Caulfield, M. (1988). Accelerating language development through picture book reading. *Developmental psychology*, 24(4), 552.

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