

# Supporting children's engagement with stories

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Creating a secure, safe environment helps put children at ease so that sharing the book is pleasurable.

Knowing the child/children helps the reader identify books that they may be interested in and possibly want to read. Providing a selection for them to choose from is important as having an interest in the book before it is read will help to provide an incentive to listen and engage with the story.

The storyteller supports the children to learn new language by talking about the meaning and relating it to things they already know. This helps to expand children's vocabulary in a meaningful way.

Talking about the story before it has been read gets the children thinking about what it might be about, other stories that might contain familiar characters or storylines and this helps the children to relate to the text and understand the concepts they are being introduced to.

Pointing to the illustrations whilst he is talking or reading the book helps the children to connect the two things (text and illustration) together to make meaning from the reading.

Sharing a book in this way helps to make the reading personal to the child as they can join in with the pointing and maybe with reading particular words. It is important to make every child feel involved in reading the story, even if they are not yet talking, so that they can hear language in use and learn what words mean in a pleasurable, meaningful way.

When reading, Neil adapts his voice to help the children "read" the storyline; so they are able to anticipate what is happening by listening to the intonation and expression he uses and cueing in to this so they know what is happening or how the characters are feeling.

As the storyteller reads, he is describing what he is doing and enabling children to understand concepts about print. These include the conventions of written English: knowing the front from the back, which part is the title and who is the author or illustrator, how and when to turn the pages, and that text in English books are read from left to right and top to bottom of the page.

Why do young children enjoy hearing the same text many times? One reason for this is that they are able to play an active role in the reading, e.g. by joining in with repeated phrases and/or identifying things that they remember from the pictures. Children enjoy saying new words and they need to practice this to get used to forming the sounds with their lips and mouth so they can use the words themselves. Words in children's books often have a rhythm or rhyme which helps children to remember the words that are being used even if they are unfamiliar. Children also get to know the characters in a story and can often relate to their actions or predicaments.

Connecting unfamiliar words and pictures to elements that the child already knows and understands helps create meaning around the unfamiliar concepts contained in the text. In this book, not all the children might understand that a kangaroo comes from Australia or that it has a pouch where it keeps its baby safe but all these things can be explored when talking before the book is read or whilst the reading is happening.

