



Writing Sample

THE IMPORTANCE OF READING TO A CHILD

A Research Summary by Joseph Dino Galindez

A child ought to be able to read, of course. Without that skill it will be difficult to get anywhere in life. Certainly not in school. That makes reading to your child a very worthwhile activity since it gives them a head-start in many ways.

- 1 It teaches them to love reading. Reading aloud to children gives them an early introduction to reading for enjoyment. It is something that can easily turn into a lifelong love of books, which is always a good thing when the modern world requires that people absorb so much information to be good and productive human beings. Like personal development coach Brian Tracy said, "Learning is the minimum requirement for success in any field."

If you can get your children to love books it will not be too difficult to turn them into lifelong learners. You do the former by helping them associate books with fun and worthwhile experiences, then the latter by continuous encouragement. When they see how much you value books, they will be more inclined to do their own reading, thus beginning a good habit that will stick with them into adulthood.

- 2 It helps their brains develop. When you read to a young child, you assist them with their cognitive development. This is the process by which they get better at solving problems, making decisions, and remembering things. They begin to use language and understand the world the way an adult does. They reason and just generally deal better with information.

When kids listen to books being read aloud, they gain knowledge about the world. This knowledge serves as useful background information on things happening around them. What is more, the discussions that follow each reading help children to interpret the stories in the context of their lives, and their lives in the context of the stories. By talking to your kids about the books you read to them you help them make the right associations. It does not just expand their vocabularies, but it also adds to the concepts that exist in their mental landscape.

- 3 It nurtures their imagination, self-control, and language skill. Reading can open a child's eyes to new worlds. Small kids have big imaginations and it is best to fill those imaginations with the best characters and settings from myth, legend, and literature. Young children also have difficulty sitting still, but when you make reading a regular part of their day it encourages them to stay in one place and focus their minds on something. A longer attention span and deeper reserve of willpower will be assets no matter how old they are.

Finally, if started from infancy, daily bedtime stories can help children acquire language and literacy. Reading to them in their first few months stimulates the parts of their brains that respond to language—and visual imagery. This is important: in America more than one in three kids start school without the foundational skills of literacy. After the third grade, two-thirds of them still cannot read very well. Books have the additional benefit of exposing children to words and grammatical structures not often used in casual everyday conversation.

- 4 It helps you bond with them. Regularly spending time and doing things with your kids will naturally strengthen your relationship. Simply being there and taking an interest in their lives is one of the best things you can do for them. Reading to them is a good opportunity to get this done, because it serves as a shared activity that you can both look forward to and depend on. Routine activities are how little kids learn to trust you, and trust is all-important.

Regular bedtime stories are not just good for bonding: they also give children feelings of love and well-being that support their development. Babies can benefit from hearing your voice, even if they will not necessarily be able to follow along with the story.

Shared experiences also give you and your kids something to discuss, which can only be good for their grasp of language. Later, bedtime can be a time for talking about their experiences and problems, with the books acting as a bridge toward meaningful conversation. Short of experiencing multiple lifetimes, literature is one of the best ways for people to get to know the world. Reading to your child introduces them to new ideas, new subjects, and new facets of the human condition.

- 5 It prepares them for school. Opportunities for parents and children to communicate one-on-one are often excellent for the children. Studies do indicate that “the more words that are in a child’s language world, the more words they will learn, and the stronger their language skills are when they reach kindergarten, the more prepared they are to be able to read, and the better they read, the more likely they will graduate from high school” (PBS.org).

Many other studies have revealed that when students encounter books before preschool they tend to do well when they start formal schooling. According to a study done by the University of Michigan, there are five essential early-reading skills. They are *phonemic awareness*, which allows people to identify and manipulate the sounds in spoken words; *phonics*, which allows them to connect written letters to spoken sounds; *reading comprehension*, which allows them to extract meaning from that they read; *vocabulary*, which allows them to communicate by giving them the necessary words; and *fluency*, which in oral reading allows people to read quickly and accurately.

Children do become familiar with these skills in elementary school and above. However, you can give them an early advantage by reading to them in their earliest years. They will not be able to work on their phonics or fluency but they will encounter the other skills sooner, therefore predisposing them to greater success as they grow up.

