



Bedtime stories aren't just for tiny tots: older children enjoy them, too. Here are some handy tips!

**Want to perfect your storytelling skills? Well, if you're sitting comfortably, then we'll begin...**

Bedtime stories encourage speech and language development and help children learn literacy skills in an enjoyable way. If nothing else, a story at snooze time helps set down healthy sleep patterns.



### *Setting the Scene!*

Getting comfortable is very important. After a busy day, children read to slow down and relax. Think about:

- level of background noise and lighting
- toys or items (e.g. computer screens!) that might distract and stimulate, rather than settle children

### *Which book tonight?!*

Let children choose books, even if it does mean the same story over and over again! Children often love to revisit familiar material and that repetition can build confidence and early reading skills. Sometimes the challenge for parents is not to appear bored on the tenth read! A child choosing to revisit a book is very different from a child being limited to the same book. Regularly read the same story. This will help their language development and enhance their memory. The first time a child hears a story they won't catch everything — but hearing it over and over again helps them to become familiar with words and to establish speech patterns.

### *Enjoying a book together!*

By reading and sharing books, you are helping to develop your child as a reader, even though he or she cannot read yet!

Children are learning amongst other things:

- to follow ideas and make sense of different events
- the marks on the page represent words and that the words remain the same!
- to join in with familiar or predictable parts

### *Get into Character*

Bedtime stories should be told in a relaxed atmosphere — so let's begin by switching off the TV. And, where possible, add some dramatization to the stories. Try reading in



different voices or carry out some of the actions being performed by the characters in the book. Anything that makes it a more stimulating story will make storytime more fun.

## Talk and listen

Avoid turning storytime into an academic exercise by using it to test your child's reading skills. Instead, just ask open questions about the stories that help them build a link between the story and their everyday life. For example: "What would you do?" or "Do you know any other black cats?"

## Book a Boys' Night In

It's even more important for dads to actively encourage their sons to read. Reading is often thought of by boys as a 'girly' thing to do — which may explain why lads do so badly in literacy tests — but if young boys see their main role model enjoying reading it'll encourage them too. In fact, it doesn't always have to be the Mr. Men stories. Reeling off your favourite line or two from a newspaper story, magazine, comic or match day football program will help them build an association between reading and fun. Research shows that when dads read bedtime stories, their kids do better at school!



## Find the age level

Spend some quality time with your children at the library. Look for books aimed at their age level and stories you enjoyed as a child. Let them choose books too — even if they pick one that's too complex for them but they like the pictures. Encourage them to browse and find stories they like the look of. Children who have favourite books when they are young tend to do better in school.

.....and most importantly  
enjoy it together!