

Tips for Parents: Think-Along Reading

What is a Think-Along?

A Think-Along is when you talk about what you're thinking as you're reading. The Think-Along was created by Dr. Roger Farr, an international authority in the field of reading assessment and instruction. Dr. Farr is an Emeritus Professor of Education at Indiana University

Doing a Think-Along

Instead of just reading aloud to children or asking them questions about a story, try doing a think-along. When parents verbalize or share what they are thinking, parents are modeling important thinking skills. For example, if you encounter a word that you don't know (or your child doesn't know), explain how you would go about figuring out what the word means.

Options:

1. Use the dictionary and look the word up.
2. Use the context of the sentence (the rest of the meaning of the sentence) to make a guess as to what the word means.
3. Verbalize what parts of the word are familiar to you and based on that knowledge make a guess about its meaning.

Example: Word—**docudrama**. Talk about what you are thinking. "This word is probably a combination of 'documentary' and 'drama'. A 'documentary' refers to a story based on factual evidence. 'Drama' refers to a story involving conflict and emotion. A **docudrama** might mean a story that deals with historical events. Some television shows are docudramas."

As you think aloud, you are sharing the things you might do when you encounter an unknown word.

Other Think-Along techniques

- think aloud about what you know about the story/topic
- make guesses about what may happen in the story
- change your mind about what may happen as you get more information
- play the part of a character in the story
- tell what you think; give your opinion
- get excited about the story
- summarize as you read
- use your hands and body to think about the story
- re-read parts of the story

The research on reading

Children who are good readers have parents who:

- read aloud to them
- talk with them about their ideas and experiences
- take them places
- limit the number of TV-watching hours

Encouraging Reading: Tips for Parents

Read aloud. Children love to hear a parent read aloud. Allow your child to select a favorite story and don't be surprised if you find yourself reading the same story over and over. Preschoolers, in particular, love to hear familiar stories. You may also want to select books or magazines about topics that you enjoy, such as a favorite sport or a new science discovery. Your own enthusiasm will help your child realize that reading is an enjoyable and rewarding experience. Even after your child learns how to read, don't stop reading aloud. The time you share together not only encourages reading development, it also creates an important bond.

Allow children to select their own books. Take trips to the library or bookstore, and let your kids hunt for books that interest them. If your children aren't sure where to look, introduce them to the children's librarian. Librarians can tell you the most popular books for kids of all ages. Once your children select a book, support their decisions. Don't push your child into selecting challenging material. In fact, if a book is too difficult, your child may lose interest in reading.

Listen to your child. Once children learn how to read, it's important for parents and children to read aloud together. This gives children an opportunity to share new skills and gives parents the opportunity to praise their progress. Provide plenty of approval and avoid making corrections. Let this be a time for your child to practice reading fluently.

Talk about experiences. While you're on an outing, talk to your children about what they see. These discussions will build a good vocabulary and enhance children's understanding of concepts. Ask questions that inspire creative or critical thinking. For example, "Why do elephants have trunks?" or "What makes trees grow?" By doing so, you help to stimulate their curiosity—a necessary factor in successful reading.

For more information:

Web links:

US Department of Education reading links:

<http://www.ed.gov/parents/read/resources/edpicks.jhtml?src=qc>

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