

Tell me a

STORY

TOP TIPS for reading with your child

Children love a story at bedtime and it's a great way of getting children into bed, relaxed, ready to lie still and wind down before going to sleep.

It's a special time in the day for a child, when they receive that last slice of their mum or dad's attention and it can be a joy for the parent to have last cuddles with their little one.

But how can you make the most of this bedtime routine?

Check out the www.childmag.co.uk guide to bedtime reading.

Why is a bedtime story so important?

Interaction with their mum and dad is vital for a child's development and your face should be the last thing that your child sees before falling asleep at night.

Parents are often very busy and don't have enough time to do all the things they would like with their child during the day - but lots of parents will make an effort to spend the time it takes to read a story at bedtime.



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This is a time when children will most often be tired and in need of that attention and comfort from their parents.

Bedtime stories will have a relaxing effect on your child – lying still in their bed and listening will get them ready to fall asleep and provide closure to the day.

By making it a routine that happens every night, the bedtime story develops into a sleep cue for your child.

A bedtime story provides parents with an important opportunity to share their values and thoughts with their child at a time when they have their undivided

attention – and for a child to share thoughts with the parent without distraction.

How to tell bedtime stories

Try to choose the type of story according to your child's mood and age. Younger children are better off with on-off stories as they have a clear finish – when the story ends, the day is over and it's sleep time.

Younger children often prefer the same story again and again. This can be tedious for the parent reading it but for the child the familiarity and monotony are comforting and relaxing for a child. Same parent, same story, same words are safe and easy and leaves the child feeling secure from knowing what comes next.

Older children can handle one-off stories as well as serials – perhaps a clear cut chapter a night.

Remember that unlike other daytime reading and activities, bedtime stories should generally help a child to wind down – not excite them.

Create the right atmosphere

Stick to the bedtime rituals that your child will associate with bedtime. Behave slowly and calmly as bedtime approaches so your relaxed mood rubs off on your child.

Dim the lights slowly and finally turn them off, use dimmer switches on lamps or overhead lights if necessary. Avoid a bright room as light stimulates the

wake-up hormones.

Avoid TV before bed as it can over stimulate. Books do the opposite.

Stick to the same bedtime routine every night, as your child's body clock will then make them automatically sleepy each night.

Home made stories

If you have the confidence and the imagination, telling your own story instead of reading a book can be great fun and your child will love it.

Home-made stories have a number of advantages:-

They allow you to pass on your own values and morals

They are more personal, intimate and a direct form of communication.

Your child can contribute – ask them what do they think happened next?

You can include family and friends in your story.

FAVOURITE CHILDREN'S BOOKS

Where the Wild Things Are
by Maurice Sendak

Alice in Wonderland
by Lewis Carroll

The House at Pooh Corner
by AA Milne

The Cat in the Hat
by Dr Seuss

Charlie and the Chocolate Factory
by Roald Dahl

Harry Potter & the Prisoner of Azkaban
by JK Rowling

Please Mrs Butler by Allan Ahlberg

The Very Hungry Caterpillar by Eric Carle

The Magic Faraway Tree
by Enid Blyton

Five Minutes Peace by Jill Murphy