

The weeread™

# Handbook



Big Brothers  
Big Sisters  
OF CALGARY AND AREA

[weeread.ca](http://weeread.ca)

## Dear reading friend,

**Reading** aloud and talking with kindergarten and Grade 1 children has all these benefits:

- Builds excitement about learning and a love of reading
- Expands their imaginations
- Strengthens listening skills and the ability to understand what they hear
- Increases attention span
- Exposes them to a richer vocabulary
- Stretches and expands the number of words they know
- Reinforces letter sounds and blending sounds into words (how language works)
- Gives opportunity to practice prediction and sequence of stories (what happens next)
- Encourages thinking and asking questions about books

It also gives a child a chance to bond with you — a high school or university student or an adult who willingly makes time to share your love of reading.

**Thank you.**

You are making a big difference to your reading friend's success right now and into the future.

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**wee read** is a program offered by Big Brothers Big Sisters of Calgary and Area

## The format of a **wee read** time together

- 1** Select a book(s) from the **wee read** box of recommended reads. You will be reading with one child that has been identified by their teacher as needing support. Each child can be allowed to occasionally choose their favourites. Try to vary the type of book so the children listen to fiction and non-fiction.
- 2** Do a Book Walk before starting to read. (More information on page 8.)
- 3** Read to your mentee, letting the words work their magic. Use lots of expression and enthusiasm! Pause every so often to pose a question that enhances their understanding, explain what a word means or draw out your young friend's personal experiences that connect to the book you are reading. Engaged, interactive reading is "a merger of motivation and thoughtfulness".
- 4** Take time after you finish reading to talk about the book. Look into their faces and listen closely. DON'T test children on their comprehension, just ask them to tell you about the book. Have a 'back and forth, give and take' conversation and follow their lead.

- 5 Try focusing on important concepts and words from the text. For example, *The Little Engine That Could* is a great book with big ideas about motivation and helping others. Rumbled, bellowed, and dingy are great new words from the story that children may never have heard before.
- 6 Play a literacy game any day that you have enough time.
- 7 End the session by walking your mentee back to their classroom. This is a good time to keep talking together and focus on what's special about reading.

**TALK TOGETHER • BEFORE • DURING • AFTER**

# The first time together

Children will be curious about you even if they don't ask you questions first.

## Share with them:

- Your name (first name or Mr/Ms... you choose)
- Why you are coming each week to read and talk with them
- That you love reading yourself and hope they will too
- Something they might be interested to know about you

## You will also want to encourage them to tell you:

- Their names (and how to pronounce them properly)
- About themselves
- What they like doing in school and after school
- Do they have any pets, brothers, sisters?
- Ask if they have a favourite book/ author/ TV program/ video game
- Interesting things like what they might want to be when they grow up

## Getting started

Be sure you have a plan for choosing the book to read that day. In the **wee read** box you will find great read-aloud books in all kinds of genres – animal stories, fairy tales, information books, poetry and alphabet books. Look together at the selection and choose one or two books. If you don't get to the second book, begin with it next time. Remember children need to hear stories multiple times so re-reading is good!

First of all, sign in as a visitor in the school office and be sure to then pick up your mentee in their classroom. Don't forget to introduce yourself and tell them your name. Keep doing this if they forget. As you walk to your assigned reading area have a chat about school, interests, books...

Sit down together. Be sure that everyone can see the pictures and words in the book.

# Before reading the book

## Doing a Book Walk

- Look at the cover together. Read the title aloud. Encourage the child to predict what the book might be about. Predicting need not take much time. Prediction is not the same thing as guessing. When you ask for a prediction you are teaching a child to use their brain and think! (Be sure after reading the book to confirm or refute their predictions.) Ask your mentee to share what they might already know about the story/topic.
- Scan the pages of the book. Talk about the illustrations together. Don't read the words on the pages, just use the inside pictures to make further predictions. Think out loud together about what the pictures might be saying about the story or the topic.
- Wonder together about the characters, the content and what is likely to happen. **Get the children to do most of the talking!**

Any clues in the pictures?

*What are they up to?*

I wonder why...



# Reading the book

- Read in a lively, engaging way, using voices, gestures, and expressions.
- Don't interrupt the reading too often when reading fiction or the flow of the story will be lost. Pausing more often to look at the pictures/charts/maps in non-fiction books helps children recognize these special features. Take time to explain important words.
- Get the child interested in print by tracking (running your finger under the words as you are reading the text) or sometimes pointing to special letters or words on a page.
- When you read a rhyming story, especially one they have heard before, stop and let them fill in the final rhyming word that ends a line. Encourage them to chime in! (Poems and nursery rhymes are great for this, too.)
- Remember to promote learning without taking away from the children's enjoyment of the book and your time together.

“When adults read to children, they are also passing torches—literacy torches—from one generation to the next.”

**Jim Trelease**

## After reading the book,

try using one or two of these ideas each time

(for no longer than 10 minutes):

**1** Have an informal conversation about the book. Listen intently to the children's ideas.

Sample prompts:

- Were we right about our predictions?
- Was there anything you liked about this book?
- Was there anything that puzzled you?
- Was there anything you thought strange? Interesting? Amazing?
- Was there anything that took you completely by surprise?
- Have you read other books like it? How is this the same? Different?
- If you had written this book how would you have made it better?
- Has anything that happens in this book ever happened to you?
- When you were reading, could you “see” the story happening in your imagination?
- What will you tell your friends (or your mom or dad or teacher) about this book?

**Remember wait time (count inside your head for 5-10 seconds) after a question or comment.**

**Quiet space helps children feel invited to respond and gives them time to think.**

- 2 Work on sequencing and retelling. Ask “What do you think happened first, next, then and finally?”
- 3 You may ask your mentee the first letter of their name. Turn to a page in the book and have them look for that letter. See how many they can find.
- 4 Help your mentee make connections between the read-aloud and their own life. Ask open-ended questions (ones that require a child to construct an answer) more than closed-ended questions (ones that require only a yes or no answer).
- 5 Use the 12 high-frequency word cards. (the, and, of, in, at, to, you, is, me, look, can, like) Give each child a card after reading the book and ask them to find the word on some of the pages. Be sure the words are in the book!

“The eventual strength of our vocabulary is determined not by the ten thousand common words but by how many rare words we understand... Whereas an adult uses only nine rare words per thousand when talking with a three-year-old, there are three times as many in a children’s book and more than seven times as many in a newspaper.”

**Jim Trelease**

- 6 Talk about new, big, cool words by using child-friendly definitions (explain the main meaning of the new word by using words the children are likely to know already). Invite them to say the new word out loud several times. Here is an example of how to increase the children's vocabulary: The child says, "I have a big dog". You say, "Show me with your hands just how huge/humongous/gigantic your dog is". Help them understand that all those words can mean big.
- 7 [Have fun playing with rhyme.](#) Try choosing a word from the book: What might rhyme with 'pool'? School, stool, drool, cool, fool... Then make a silly sentence with the rhyming words. "The cool fool stood on a stool at school and fell into the pool."
- 8 [Play the My Name Game](#) that is in the wee read handbook. Children love this game and it builds oral language.
- 9 [Teach them a tongue twister.](#) See if they can say it really fast. Slow it down and ask them to listen for the sound they hear most often in the words. Substitute their names into the tongue twister that begins with the same letter of their name.

# Tips for reading aloud to children

## Before reading:

- Sit close together so you can all see the pictures in the book
- Read the title and the author
- Wonder together and predict what the book will be about

## During reading:

- Use lots of expression and enthusiasm
- Engage children while reading
- Use pauses wisely
- Generate interest in the print
- Have fun!

## After reading:

- Talk about the book
- Read the book again sometime

Remember to **READ EVERY DAY THAT YOU EAT!**

## Book Talks and the 3T's

Children learn a great deal from being read to and eventually reading themselves. However, conversations between children and you really improves their oral language, including vocabulary and comprehension.

- Let children lead the conversation.
- Extend your conversations with simple prompts.
- Five relaxed back-and-forth exchanges between a child and you.
- Truly listen to the child and acknowledge what he or she has said with a comment or question. Eye contact and facial expressions are very important indicators that you are interested in what each child is saying. Encourage children to listen to each other too!



# 3T's

**Tune in  
Take turns  
Talk more**

# Congratulations!

You have completed the wee read Handbook

“As you read to a child, you’re pouring into the child’s ears (and brain) all the sounds, syllables, endings, and blendings that will make up the words she will someday be asked to read and understand. And through stories you are filling in the background knowledge necessary to understand things that aren’t in her neighbourhood—like war or whales or locomotives.” *Jim Trelease*



wee read is brought to you by Big Brothers Big Sisters of Calgary and Area

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