

TEN HINTS on HOW TO READ WITH YOUR KIDS

Children's author and "literary ambassador" Hazel Edwards says children who have been read to have longer attention spans, more general knowledge, are more tolerant of differences and are better equipped to start school.

"As an author, I can tell the children who have been read to regularly," Edwards says.

"Reading shows children ways to use words in writing or speaking. It makes them better listeners and feeds curiosity."

She says teaching a child to read is an "investment" and advises parents to start reading to a child soon after birth.

"A baby won't understand the story, but will enjoy the closeness," Edwards says.

"Start with picture books. It's not the number of books you read, but the quality.

"Reading is not a duty, it's fun."

HOW TO READ WITH YOUR KIDS

1. Choose books you like.
2. Have a big enough bag to carry the book with you.
3. Use audio books in the car.
4. Hold the book at an angle they can see.
5. Look at the illustrations, too. They are clues to the story.
6. Involve by asking questions such as, "What sort of exercise do you think he was doing in the picture?"
7. Accept all answers. Don't say, "No" or "That's wrong". Instead say, "Why do you think that?" The book belongs to the reader's imagination as well as the creator.
8. Sub-text is what goes on underneath the story. Some kids "get" it. Others do later.
9. Ask questions such as, "Why", "How" and "What do you think happened after the end of the story?"
10. If you have mixed-aged children, start a family serial using a junior chapter book. Encourage funny voices for the dialogue.

Hazel Edwards has written more than 200 books, including the children's classic, *There's A Hippopotamus On Our Roof Eating Cake*. www.hazeledwards.com

