



Daddy's Time to Read!

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Reading and Bonding in those Early Months & Years.

Dads play a critical role in their children's literacy development by modeling reading, sharing stories, exploring the world together, and engaging in meaningful conversations that build critical thinking skills.

In those early months with your newborn, snuggling up, holding your child and reading and singing to them is a wonderful way for you, as a Daddy to bond with your child (esp. as breastfeeding is not really an option!)

As the child gets older, while a father may 'bond' with their child by engaging in sports activities such as kicking a ball, this can be done with little or no talk. While physical activity is great for the body and good fun, it is not great for developing a line of communication between a parent and a child. Reading with your child on the other hand, allows you to talk about things that matter, such as hopes, fears, troubles and triumphs.

When fathers read aloud to their child, they are able to:

- Reassure their child that they love and cherish them as much as their mothers do
- Enhance their children's literacy skills
- Spend quality time together
- Communicate about a variety of topics
- Strengthen the bond with their child

Literacy Research in HK Context

According to PIRLS global literacy study involving 50 countries^[1], Hong Kong has the lowest rate of parent-child reading in the world, with only 13% of HK parents reading to their children (vs. international average of 37%).

In another study conducted by local charity Bring Me A Book Hong Kong, they found that 60% of fathers *rarely or never* read to their children.^[2]



Daddy as a Role Model

Parents own reading behaviour dramatically influences the child's reading relationship. A 2008 Kids and Family Reading study by leading publisher Scholastic, found that Parents who read frequently are **six times more likely** to have children who read regularly, compared to parents who read books aloud less than once a week.[3]

Jim Trelease, educator and million copy best-selling author of "The Read Aloud Handbook" advises dads:

"If you are not a reader yourself, think of reading to your child as getting a second chance in life – to meet and enjoy the books you missed out on as a kid. Or look at it this way: Reading to your child is really just another form of coaching, except this one allows for snuggling."

The importance Fathers play as a role model is especially acute for boys as there are not enough positive male role models for literacy. The majority of adults involved in children's reading are women (including kindergarten and primary school teachers and childcare providers) and boys tend not to see reading as a masculine activity. Studies that have shown that:

- 1) Boys who were read to by their fathers scored significantly higher in reading achievement
- 2) When fathers read recreationally, their sons read more and scored higher than did boys whose fathers did little or no recreational reading.

What can I do as a Father?

As many fathers in Hong Kong work late and may not have time to read to their child every night, what can they do?

- Read once or twice a week or at weekends, even if its just one book or chapter (with a good conversation about it) – its not quantity but quality time together that counts
- Demonstrate that you enjoy reading in front of your child (even newspapers and magazines count!)
- Take a selection of favourite books to work so if you are delayed and can't see your child before bed, you can read a book over the phone as your child follows along at home



- Fathers who are away from home for long stretches can videotape themselves reading aloud so their children can watch them telling stories night after night and not lose touch.
- When you do read, have fun – be creative, make funny voices or be dramatic!

Most importantly – Read aloud with happiness in mind, not education. As Mem Fox said, “When I say to a parent, “read to a child”, I don’t want it to sound like medicine. I want it to sound like chocolate.”

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[1] Progress in International Reading Literacy Study, 2016

[2] Bring Me A Book Hong Kong collected 286 questionnaires from parents’ feedback after six- month library program installation in between 2007 -2009.

[3] 2008 Kids & Family Report by Scholastic interviewed more than 500 children and 1000 Parents across 25 cities in U.S. Parents’ and children’s reading frequency groups are defined: High = read books for fun every day, Low = read books for fun less than once a week.