

Reading at Home

A Solid Foundation Course for Parents

Storytelling

Session **1**



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Name _____



Most children will learn how to read. Whether they will read depends in large part upon the encouragement they receive and the example their parents set.



from *Becoming a Nation of Readers*
National Commission on Reading

Welcome to

Reading at Home

A Solid Foundation Course for Parents

Session 1

My name is _____, and I am your group leader. We will meet for three sessions in the *Reading at Home* course. In each session, we will receive a new manual that contains information and activities. I will read the lessons in the manuals and guide our group through the activities.

Each session lasts about 90 minutes. New information is presented in each session. The first session contains the most information. In the next two sessions, more time is devoted to discussion. At the conclusion of the third session, we will hold a graduation ceremony. Those of us who attend all three sessions will receive certificates.

Reading at Home is a very practical, take-it-home-and-use-it course. Between sessions, we complete tasks with our families. Our work at home with our families is the most important part of this course.

Our work at home with our families is the most important part of this course.

Getting Acquainted

Please write my name and telephone number in your manual. I want you to feel free to call me between sessions if you have questions.

Group Leader's Name: _____

Group Leader's Telephone Number: (_____) _____

EXERCISE

 **PARTNERS**


To get to know each other better, I will assign each of us to a partner. If we have an odd number in the group, I will take two partners. Then we will take two minutes to talk with our partners. At the end of that time, we will each introduce our partner to the group and tell the names of our partner's children. If we learn any other interesting information about our partner, we can tell that too.

Group Leader: Assign partners. Allow two minutes. Begin introductions.

Partner's name: _____

Names of partner's children: _____

TELL THE GROUP

 *I'll introduce my partner first and tell the names of my partner's children. Then my partner will introduce me. Then we will continue until everyone has been introduced.*

APPLAUD

 **APPLAUD AFTER EACH INTRODUCTION.**

EXERCISE

 **NAME OF GROUP MEMBERS**

Now write the first name of each group member below. Need help? Check the name tags. This list will help us remember everyone's name.

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

The Reading Habit

Session 1

Children learn the skill of reading at school, but they acquire the habit of reading at home. Once established, this habit will stay with a child through school and beyond school. As an adult, he or she will continue to find time at home to read and learn. *Reading at Home* helps parents help their children develop sound reading habits. It leaves the job of teaching the skill of reading to the school.

Reading at Home teaches a system for building family reading habits. The system is based on research that has identified key family activities that encourage children to read. The system begins with storytelling and concludes with methods for reading textbooks. Each step in the system is important. Some of the activities will be familiar to us; others will be new. Putting all these activities together is what makes *Reading at Home* effective.

Some children need encouragement to read more often. Other children enjoy reading so much that they neglect other responsibilities. Some children read for pleasure but are reluctant to read their schoolwork. Other children read their lessons but do not read for pleasure. Still other children have excellent reading habits, and we want to be sure they maintain those habits as they grow older. *Reading at Home* will help our children for different reasons.

EXPECTATIONS

In what ways do you expect your family to benefit from your participation in this course?

I'll tell how I expect my family to benefit; then I'll ask each of you to do the same.



EXERCISE

TELL THE GROUP

Children learn the skill of reading at school, but they acquire the habit of reading at home.

Storytelling

Every culture is rich with oral tradition, with stories that tell of its history and its heroes. Stories teach children the values of their people. Every family has its own stories—serious stories and funny stories.

Stories are also the basis of literature. Children who enjoy hearing and telling stories will enjoy reading stories. Family storytelling generates an interest in words, in humor, and in the drama of human experience. Family storytelling encourages a love for good stories and good reading.

Stories may tell of actual events, or they may be complete fiction. Sometimes a good storyteller, especially if he is a fisherman, may even blend truth and fiction.

*Family storytelling encourages
a love for good stories and
good reading.*

Lesson 1: Parts of a Story

Session 1

Parents can use stories to instill in their children a love for words, reading, and literature. By learning how a story is constructed, parents can become expert storytellers. They can also teach their children to tell stories.

Stories have beginnings, middles, and ends. The beginning introduces the characters and describes the setting. The middle presents a problem and tells how the characters deal with the problem. In the end, the problem is resolved.



Introduction. Storyteller describes the characters and the setting.



Problem. Storyteller creates a problem and adventure for the characters.



Solution. After some adventure, storyteller solves the character's problem.

INTRODUCTION

In the introduction, the storyteller sets the stage, describing the characters and their surroundings. The introduction tells the listener when and where the story takes place and who the story is about. The introduction provides details that help the listener picture the characters in her mind.

Real-Life Story: "I was sitting in the kitchen, reading the newspaper, when I heard a noise in the living room. I went to the living room and found a bird, inside the house, flying against the window."

This is a simple beginning to a story. The listener can immediately picture the storyteller, the inside of a house, and a bird.

PROBLEM

After introducing the main character and describing the setting, the storyteller creates a problem for the character. In a long story, the main character may be presented with several problems.

Real-Life Story: "I couldn't get the bird out of the house. I tried to catch the bird in a sack. I chased the bird with a broom."

In the story about the bird, the problem is to get the bird out of the house. Telling about each ill-fated attempt to solve the problem makes the story interesting. The listener chuckles as he pictures the storyteller swinging a broom wildly as the little bird flies about.

SOLUTION

Good storytellers don't solve the problem too soon. The solution comes only after several adventures, changes of fortune, and close calls. The listener is held in suspense.

Real-Life Story: "At last, I opened a window, and the bird flew away to freedom."

The bird finally flew out of the house when the window was opened, but the story is only interesting because the storyteller describes the events that led up to this conclusion. To say, "A bird got in the house, and I opened a window to let it out," does not make an interesting story.

EXERCISE



FAMILY STORIES

What stories do your children enjoy? Think of a fairy tale, real family adventure, episode from your life, or other story your children have enjoyed hearing from you.

Write the topic of the story here (just a few words):

What is the main problem in the story?

TELL THE GROUP



Share the topic of your children's favorite story with the group. What is the main problem in the story? I'll share my topic first; then I'll ask each group member to share the topic of his or her children's favorite story.

Lesson 2: Active Listening

Session 1

Family storytelling activities teach children to express themselves with words. By listening to stories, children practice good listening skills. Parents can encourage good listening skills by teaching their children the principles of ACTIVE listening. Listening is not the passive side of communication. Good listening requires just as much skill and effort as good speaking. Explaining this fact to children helps them to be better listeners in school, with family members, and with their friends.

The following rules for ACTIVE listening are helpful:

Alert. Be attentive, alert.

Concentrate. Don't be distracted.

Talk less. Listen more.

Interact. Smile, respond, nod, and ask questions.

Visualize. Picture in your mind what you are hearing.

Eye contact. Look the person in the eyes.

Good listening requires just as much skill and effort as good speaking.

EXERCISE



ACTIVE LISTENING

I will assign each of us a partner. When I say, "Go," one member of each pair will begin telling about his or her family. Every 20 seconds I will say, "Switch." When I say, "Switch," the other member of the pair will begin telling about his or her family. This will continue until each member has three or four opportunities to speak. This is, however, not a speaking exercise. It is a listening exercise. The person in each pair who is listening should try to be an ACTIVE listener, observing the rules of ACTIVE listening.

Group Leader: Assign pairs. Say "Go." Every 20 seconds, say, "Switch." Stop when each person has had three or four opportunities to speak and listen.

TELL THE GROUP



Tell one interesting fact you learned about your partner.

APPLAUD



APPLAUD AFTER EACH REPORT FOR GREAT ACTIVE LISTENING.

TAKING IT HOME



Storytelling provides a great opportunity to practice ACTIVE listening with our families. We will learn a storytelling technique to teach our children. When we tell stories with our children, we can also teach them the importance of ACTIVE listening.

Lesson 3: Story Circles

Session 1


When two or more people are together, they can create a story with a method called story circles. One person begins the story with an introduction—providing the setting and introducing the main characters. When she is finished, the next person adds to the story. When that person is finished, the next person continues. Each person decides how much she will say. The story circle continues as long as the group enjoys developing the story.

STORY CIRCLE

EXERCISE

I will begin a story by reading an introduction. The group member to my left will add to the story. Then the next group member will continue. We will all practice the rules for ACTIVE listening. When everyone has had two turns, I will conclude the story.

Introduction: "It was a rainy autumn day in the fishing village of Highland Bay, where John and Alice were launching their boat into the mist. The night before, they had been up late repairing the huge hole in their net. They wondered if this new day would bring another adventure and another hole to repair."

We can use the story circle technique with our children to teach them to tell stories, to be interested in stories, and to be ACTIVE listeners. 

TAKING IT HOME

CREATING INTRODUCTIONS

EXERCISE

The introduction that I read to start the story helped get us going. We can teach our children to create introductions to stories for family story circles.

Write a brief introduction for a story circle you might hold with your family. Use your imagination. Introduce the characters and the setting.

**TELL THE
GROUP**



Let's share our introductions with the group. I'll read mine first, then each group member can share his or her introduction. We will practice the rules for ACTIVE listening.

**TAKING IT
HOME**

The introduction we have written can help us start story circles with our children. We can also teach our children to create introductions.

Lesson 4: Talking About Reading

Session 1

When little children see their parents read, they are fascinated by the mystery of messages held inside tiny images of ink on paper. When children are older, they are impressed that parents know so much because they read. But simply seeing parents read is not enough to sustain a child's interest in reading. More important is the bond of interaction between parent and child that surrounds the act of reading. When children are small, they enjoy being held and read to. When children are older, they enjoy talking about reading. In the next session, we will discover the importance of talking about reading with our children.

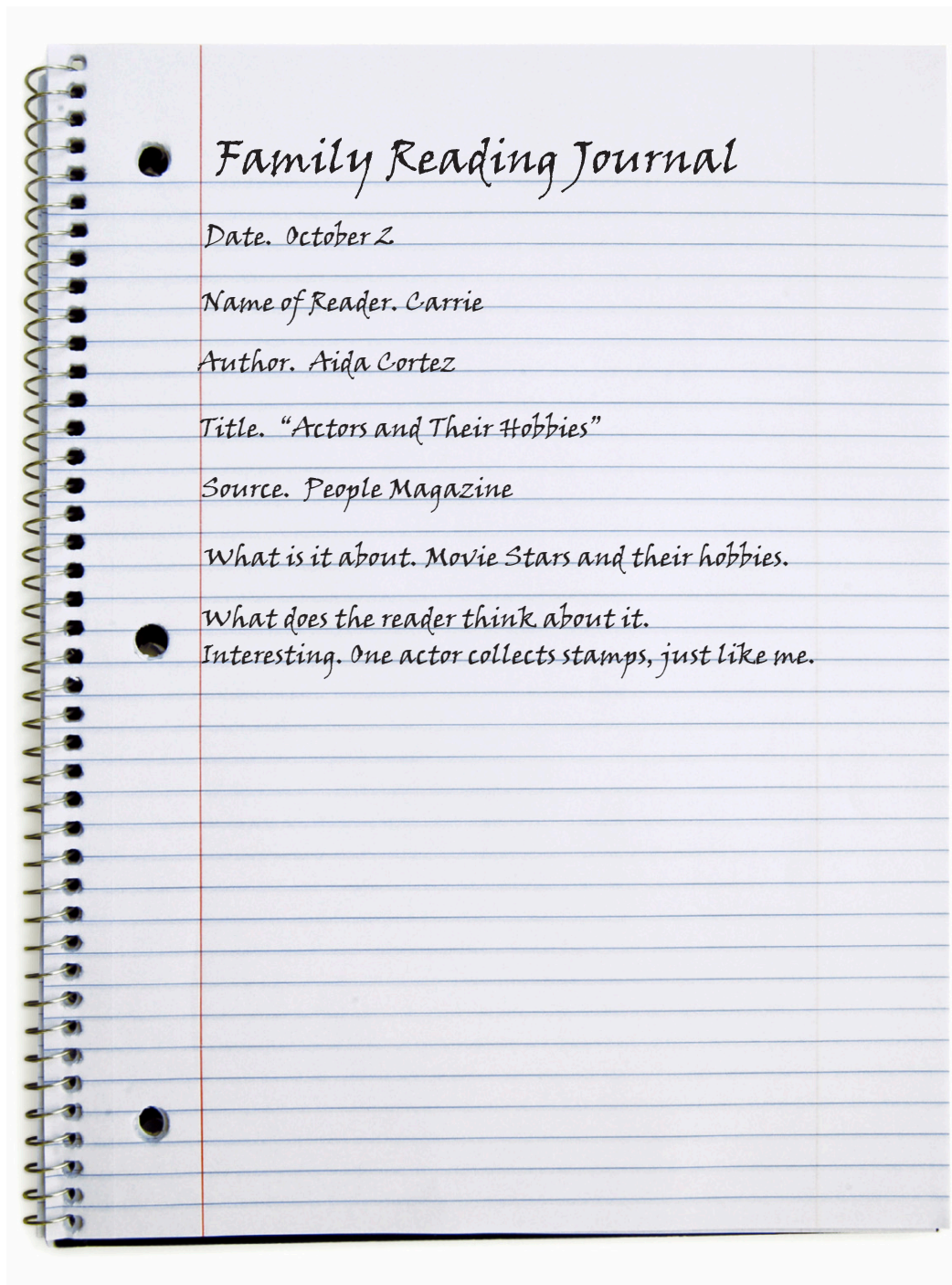
Family Reading Journal

To prepare for the next session, we will keep a journal of what our family reads this week. We will use the family reading journal provided with this manual. We will make one entry in the family reading journal for each member of our family. For small children, we will record information about stories read to them.








Interview each member of your family this week to get the information for your family reading journal. The entries in the journal need not be lengthy or detailed. Just a few words will do. At the next session, we will be able to talk about our family's reading. Then we will be better prepared to talk about reading with our children. The entry in the family reading journal on the next page is an example for us.

The family reading journal is a record of important articles or books that family members read. If each family member makes just one entry each week, the family reading journal becomes an interesting family treasure. The family reading journal also encourages family members to talk with each other about their reading.

**TAKING IT
HOME**



Let's review the key points from this session:

-  Children learn the skill of reading at school, but they acquire the habit of reading at home.
-  Storytelling builds a child's desire to read.
-  Stories have beginnings, middles, and ends.
-  Family storytelling activities teach children to express themselves with words and to be good listeners.
-  ACTIVE listening requires skill and effort.
-  Families can create stories with the story circle method.
-  Simply seeing parents read is not enough. More important is the bond of interaction between parents and children that accompanies reading.

Taking it Home

We have learned that storytelling encourages reading and is a good family activity. Now it is time to put our learning into practice. Listed below are our tasks for the week.

As I read each task, write your initials as a commitment to your family and the parent group to complete the task before the next session.

TASKS FOR THE WEEK

Parent's Initials:

- _____ 1. I will teach my children the rules of ACTIVE listening and will help them practice ACTIVE listening during a storytelling session.
- _____ 2. I will hold a storytelling session with my family and use a story circle.
- _____ 3. I will talk with each of my children about reading—what they are reading and what I am reading.
- _____ 4. I will make one entry for each family member in the family reading journal this week. Forms are in the back of this manual.

Involving our Children

How will our children respond when we take these tasks home?

Some children will respond very willingly to the tasks we take home. They will enjoy our attention. They will appreciate our help.

Other children may be less eager to take on new responsibilities, and they may be the ones who need our help the most.

To gain the cooperation of our children, it is a good idea to sit down with them and explain what we are doing. We may say something like this:

"I am taking a course with several other parents. The course is called *Reading at Home*. In the course, we are learning ways to help our families read and enjoy reading. You know that reading is important to our family. In the course, I have assignments to complete—just like homework in school. But

my assignments include activities that involve you. I know we will have fun with these activities. I will appreciate your help."

If the children grumble, they are probably just a little nervous about something that is new. We need to be firm and positive when we introduce new ideas to our children. They will be captured by our enthusiasm and our interest in them.

Closing the Session

We will take home this manual to help us with our tasks for the week. You have my name and telephone number so you can call me during the week if you have questions.

I will collect the pencils so we will have them at the next session.

Group Leader: Collect pencils.

The next page in this manual is a tear-out page. We can place the tear-out page in a prominent place in our homes (like on the refrigerator). We can check each task as we complete it.

The lessons we have learned in this session are just the beginning of our *Reading at Home* system. In the next two sessions, we will continue to build the system. We will also take more time to talk about our families' responses to the system.

Good luck with the tasks for the week! Let's make good things happen for our families.

APPLAUD



APPLAUD FOR A GREAT FIRST SESSION! COME ON, A BIG, HEARTY ROUND OF APPLAUSE.

Reading at Home

Building Family Reading Habits

TASKS FOR WEEK #1

Check (✓) when completed

- _____ I will teach my children the rules of ACTIVE listening and will help them practice ACTIVE listening during a storytelling session.
- _____ I will hold a storytelling session with my family and use a story circle.
- _____ I will talk with each of my children about reading—what they are reading and what I am reading.
- _____ I will make one entry for each family member in the family reading journal this week.



Reading Brings the Universe Home.

Family Reading Journal

Family Reading Journal

Date.

Name of Reader.

Author.

Title.

Source.

What is it about.

What does the reader think about it.

Family Reading Journal

Date.

Name of Reader.

Author.

Title.

Source.

What is it about.

What does the reader think about it.

Family Reading Journal

Date.

Name of Reader.

Author.

Title.

Source.

What is it about.

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What does the reader think about it.

Family Reading Journal

Date.

Name of Reader.

Author.

Title.

Source.

What is it about.

What does the reader think about it.

Academic Development Institute

Founded in 1984

The Academic Development Institute (ADI) works with families, schools, and communities so that all children may become self-directed learners, avid readers, and responsible citizens, respecting themselves and those around them. ADI's vision is of an American landscape filled with distinct school communities reflecting the hopes and dreams of the people intimately attached to them. To this image of the school as a community, ADI is devoted. When the school functions as a community, its constituents (students, parents, teachers, staff) associate with one another and share common values about the education of children. At the root, members of the school community assume responsibility for one another. Those children become our children, and parents are not external agents, but full partners in the education of their children and of each other's children. Teachers are not isolated practitioners of pedagogy, but professionals integrated into the web of community and buoyed by common purpose.



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