

Picture Walk

Dear Mom and Dad:

A technique that teachers use a lot in school is the picture walk. It is used to establish interest in the story and to set up positive expectations about what is to come. It also reinforces children's use of the strategy of relying on visual cues while reading.

You can do picture walks at home, too. When you do a picture walk with your child it allows you to

- Explore how your child sees and interprets the illustrations
- Help your child discuss and predict the shape of the story from the visual cues (pictures)
- Help your child connect visual images to his/her own experiences and knowledge
- Actively involve your child in problem-solving
- Model enthusiasm for books by sharing stories and experiences with your child

Conducting a picture walk before reading a story allows you to

- Create interest in reading the story and activate prior knowledge about the topic
- Learn about your child's understanding of his/her experience related to the story
- Help your child practice using visual cues (pictures) as a reading strategy
- Think about questions and concepts to explore with your child while reading

Here's what you do:

1. Gather several good children's books to use. For suggestions, ask your local children's librarian or consult one of the many websites with recommended booklists.
2. Ask your child to select a book. Tell your child you would like to learn how to do a picture walk and that you know we have been doing them at school. Ask him/her to help you.
3. During the picture walk, make observations about what you notice or wonder about, or what you think might happen next. Here are some useful questions/prompts to use:
 - Let's look at the front cover. What do you think this story is about?
 - This is just like when you _____. An experience I had was...
 - Turn the page. What do you see? What do you think is happening?
 - What do you think will happen next?
 - Here we are, almost at the end of the book. How will the story end?
 - What are you curious to know more about in the story? I wonder if...

You and your child can take turns throughout the picture walk or you can each take a turn doing one yourself. Thank you for helping your child practice this useful reading strategy.

Sincerely,

Your child's teacher

It's in the Bag

Dear Mom and Dad:

This activity helps develop your child's creative thinking and language skills.

Materials

- Household Items: e.g., odds and ends like a piece of string or a sheet of paper, an item of clothing, a personal item such as your child's comb or toothbrush, or any assortment of household items.
- A clean, non-see-through bag or pillow case

How to Play

1. Put the items you have gathered in the bag. Ask your child to reach into the bag without looking and pull out an object.
2. Ask, "What did you pull out of the bag?"
3. When your child has named the object, say, "If you give _____ (your child's name) a _____ (name of the object), he's/she's going to want to _____." Your child finishes by saying what he/she will want to do.
For example: If the object is a deck of playing cards you would say, "If you give _____ (your child's name) a deck of cards he's/she's going to want to..."; your child supplies an ending like "play."

Tips and Suggestions

- You might have to help your child think of what they would do with the item until they catch on.
- You can gradually add more unusual items, like a measuring cup, a can opener, a box of crackers, etc. The more creative you are in choosing the objects, the more creative your child will need to be when thinking up what to do with them.
- It is also fun to have your child round up items for you to pull out of the bag! (You will want to set some ground rules so your child chooses things that are safe for him/her to handle.)

Sincerely,

Your child's teacher

Speech Balloons

Dear Mom and Dad:

Cartoons and comic strips use speech balloons and thought bubbles to show the reader who is speaking (or thinking) and what they are saying. They do this instead of putting quotation marks around the words.

We are using speech balloons as a way to focus on dialogue (character talk). We have written conversations between the different characters in the books we are reading in class. You and your child can have fun with this activity by adding speech and thought balloons to pictures or photos.

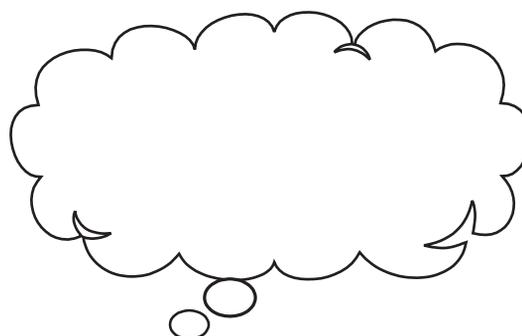
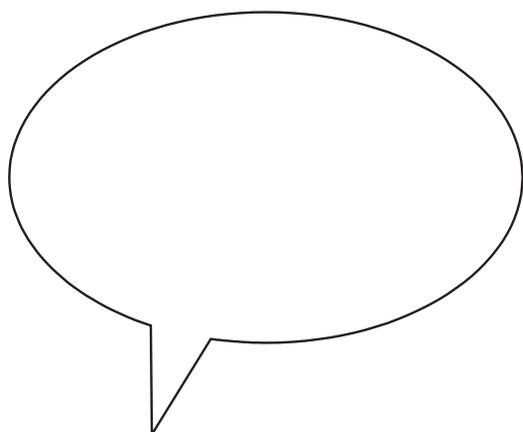
Here's what you do:

1. With your child, choose a variety of pictures from newspapers or magazines that have more than one person in them (people and pets also work well, too).
2. Talk with your child about what might be going on in the picture and what the people (the characters in your story) might be saying or thinking. Remind your child that what each character says should make sense and go with the picture.
3. Copy the speech and thought balloons below to write what each character is going to say.
4. Tape or glue the speech balloons near the characters who will be talking and read the dialogue.

It is also fun to use family photos. You can find dialogue stickers at scrapbooking stores or make your own blank balloons from white paper.

Sincerely,

Your child's teacher



If/Then Books

Dear Mom and Dad:

Children enjoy reading stories in which the author uses a cause/effect pattern. In these stories, something happens or an action is taken by a character and it leads to something else happening. This “chain” continues until the story completes a circle and winds up just as it began. These stories are fun for children to read and lots of fun to write. When children are learning how to use different story structures in their own writing, it is easier for them to start with the basic idea of cause/effect by writing an If/Then story. You can help your child make an If/Then story by using the blank book template in this take-home bag.

Here is what to do:

First you will need to assemble the book using the template included.

- Cut out each page on the solid line.
- Lay pages on top of each other in order, with the cover (the page with the title and who it is by) on top.
- Staple on the left side, or punch holes and tie with yarn or thread. (You can save this step for then end after your child has finished the book.)

Next:

1. Decide who the story will be about. Your child might want to make the first book about a favorite story character or member of the family.
2. Show your child the blank book and go over the pattern. Notice how it repeats.
3. Talk about how you could finish each sentence and write down your child’s ideas on a blank piece of paper. Each If/Then pairing should go together in some way. For instance:

If you give [character’s name] a bicycle
She’ll want to learn to ride it.
If you give [character’s name] a sandwich
He’ll want to eat it.

4. Once you have a list, ask your child to choose the ones he/she wants to put in the book. You can print the words for your child or he/she can print his/her own. Have your child draw pictures to illustrate each page.

You can add more pages to this book, or you can make other books by using this pattern as a starter and adding different series of events—the more outrageous the better!

I hope you and your child will enjoy making these books together. Please send them to school with your child when they are finished so we can share them in class.

Sincerely,

Your child’s teacher