



Introduction to 1, 2, 3, 4, and More Lessons

Designed for Parents and Early Childhood Educators

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Children learn to read by observing and imitating others that serve as reading models. These models might be parents, grandparents, older siblings, or early childhood teachers. Adults and older siblings who read fluently can be perfect first literacy models in children's lives. From literacy models, children develop positive feelings associated with books. Being held by an adult and sharing the experience of listening to and looking at a lovely storybook is one of the best ways that a child will begin to connect positively with reading. When children hear stories read fluently and frequently, they become comfortable with storybook language and often ease naturally into the reading process. When children have been read to during the early years, by the time they start school they have already learned some important fundamentals of reading through observation and imitation.



In contrast to children who were read to in the preschool years, many challenged readers begin school experience with a deficit in the skills that build toward literacy because they haven't had the experience of hearing and sharing books read aloud. They have missed thousands of bedtime stories during their preschool years and may have limited experience making early positive connections to reading. The early years are the perfect time to help children set the stage for a lifetime of successful reading.

The *1, 2, 3, 4 and More Lessons* are designed for parents, grandparents, siblings, and teachers of young children to use who want to enhance the early reading experience. These lessons can be downloaded from the author's website and include step-by-step plans for the author's books as well as carefully selected, fun children's books by other authors.

There are five steps in each of the 1, 2, 3, 4, and More Lesson. Throughout the lessons, **talking-thinking aloud®** strategies are

encouraged. Talking-thinking aloud strategies are used throughout the lessons to:

- ★ talk about the pictures in the book;
- ★ model how to think before and after reading;
- ★ begin applying the techniques found in P-R-R-R-Ring through the book; and
- ★ support young children in the process until they naturally want to take over reading words, parts of stories, and ultimately, entire books.

The 1, 2, 3, 4, and More Lessons begin with a young child observing a fluent model reading a storybook. The talking-thinking aloud strategies are integrated and used throughout the lessons to demonstrate how to read and what the reader is thinking while reading. Both the reader and child share their thoughts throughout the lesson.

1, 2, 3, 4, and More Lessons

Each of the 1, 2, 3, 4 and More Lessons follows a five step process that can be done in one session or over time with the child, depending on attention span.

Step 1. During the first step of the lesson, the reader and child explore the pages in the book and talk about it together using techniques represented by the acronym P-R-R-R-Ring.

Predict by talking-thinking aloud using pictures and text content before, during, and after reading each page.

Read the pages to model how to read aloud.

Respond to the child's predictions by affirming correct responses or allowing the child to self-correct.

Reflect on what was read by using questions or encouraging the child to retell the story.

Reread the book fluently with expression.

Step 2 - The adult and child read together for enjoyment when rereading books, sharing the reading process by talking-thinking

aloud. Techniques that can be used include choral reading together, echo reading, reading in unison, and having the child repeat refrains or recite cumulative sequence patterns or rhymes. Selecting books that have repetitive patterns works best for this part of the interactive lesson.

Step 3. In the third step of the lesson, the reader and child revisit the text that has just been read to practice reading skills such as comprehension, vocabulary, letter recognition, and letter-sound awareness.

Step 4. In the fourth step of the lesson, the story needs to be made relevant and meaningful by connecting it to the child's life. Discussion can encourage the child to see the relevance of the story by talking about a similar experience.


Step 5/More. *More* is the fifth step of the lesson that is designed to foster creative engagement with the story. Suggested activities in this section are intended to help the child remember and experience the story through art, music, drama, or writing.

Each step in the 1, 2, 3, 4 and More Lessons is important, but the adult should be sensitive to the child's attention span. It isn't necessary to cover all of the lessons every time the book is read. The lesson steps can be spread over time during subsequent readings of the book. The first time a book is introduced to a child, it is important to focus on step 1 using the PRRRRing strategies. The lessons provide ideas for the adult in how to use the talking-thinking aloud methods to share the reading process with a child and explain the thinking process that leads to understanding and remembering. Eventually the child will begin to share in the reading process. Books selected for lessons should be both old classics and newer publications with the types of story patterns found in folk literature, as well as simple early childhood concept books. Begin with very easy books with simple pictures and then sequentially introduce books with patterns, easy-to-read stories, and eventually, more complex young children's books.

Good first books are simple and predictable with repetitive language patterns that make sense. *The Three Bears* and *The Little Red Hen* are

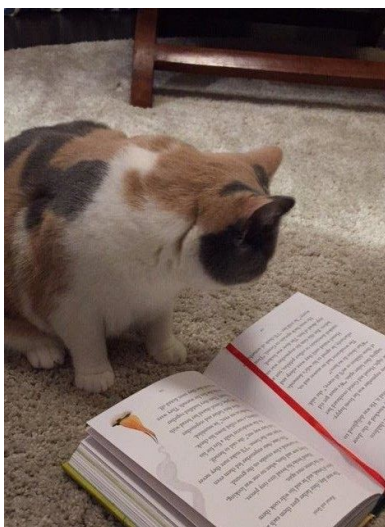
examples of easy predictable stories that promote interactive reading. Good early books will often have refrains, cumulative sequence, and simple rhymes. Also, simple concept books on colors, numbers, shapes, opposites, and other suitable early childhood topics are perfect for use.

Basic predictable patterns enhance the child's memory and motivate love for books. Most folktales and many predictable patterns in contemporary children's books enhance the opportunity for valuable early participation. The 1, 2, 3, 4 and More Lessons follow five easy steps with the first step using a technique called PRRRRing through the book.

 **Step 1 – During the first step of the 1-2-3-4 and More Lessons, the reader or adult and child explore the pages in the book and talk about it together using techniques represented by the acronym PRRRRing that supports the interactive reading process.**

When introducing new books and rereading familiar ones, the talking-thinking aloud strategies using the PRRRRing process are important to fostering the development of children's crucial early literacy skills.

PRRRRing Through the Book



- ***Predict by talking about your thinking as you look at pictures and text content before and after reading each page.***
- ***Read each page to model how to read aloud.***
- ***Respond to the predictions by affirming correct responses or allowing the child to self-correct.***
- ***Reflect on the story by using questions and retelling the story or encourage the child to retell the story.***
- ***Reread the story fluently with expression.***

This sequential PRRRRing process begins with the first reading of the book. The use of these interactive reading strategies creates a framework

that allows the reader or adult to share the reading process with the child. The adult is both a reading aloud model and a participant with the child. Talking-thinking aloud as the book is being read page by page during the first reading provides a model for how readers think. Talking about what might happen later in the book plays a critical role in building the foundation for thinking logically and in the development of a child's comprehension strategies. Orally reflecting upon how the predictions compare to the actual content of the story helps the child move beyond picture reading. Over time, the child begins to link his or her own experiences to the story. As a result of this talking-thinking aloud process, the child will develop the habit of reading for meaning. Each letter in the **PRRRRing** process provides a prompt for the adult.



Throughout each lesson, the adult should observe how the child connects current knowledge and makes sense through the predictions about what will happen next. The adult can guide the interactive story conversation by talking-thinking aloud. The child should be encouraged to make logical connections between predictions and previous parts of the story. This helps the development of focus on and thought about what is being said in the story. Talking about what happens in the story before and after reading provides the child with insight into the thinking that takes place during reading. Encouraging the child to imagine how a story *looks* in his or her mind helps to develop the connection between reading and thinking. The importance of this part of the process is remembering the story parts.

During the rereading at the end of the PRRRRing cycle, the adult should model how to read fluently with expression. Children's fluent reading develops over time. During the emergent literacy period, support the child with clues during challenges in reading. Successful reading develops over years of experience of the child both hearing many books read and reading books independently. Fluency is attained gradually and is nurtured by kind and gentle support from adults.



Step 2 - During the second step of the 1-2-3-4 and More Lessons, the adult and child read together for enjoyment when re-reading a book. They share the reading process by talking-thinking aloud and using choral reading strategies such as reading in unison, echoing the reader, repeating refrains or parts, reciting cumulative sequence patterns, and adding a rhyming word.

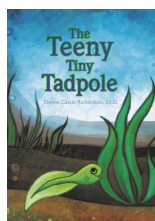
During the second experience of rereading a storybook, the reader and child should enjoy the book together using interactive reading strategies. Interactive strategies involve adults providing ways for the child to connect with the text and actively participate by turn-taking reading. Choral reading strategies promote interactive turn-taking when reading together. The reader and child can use echo reading, response reading, character part reading, reading in unison, one word or close reading, repetitive refrains, and cumulative repetition. These strategies are explained below:

- **Echo reading** –The child repeats the exact paragraph, passage, or page that the adult read. The child can be encouraged to repeat phrases, lines, or complete sentences, depending on what is appropriate for the stage of development. As a child gains more experience with interactive reading and memory span increases, the parts that are echoed can increase in length. Any book can be used to echo read.
- **Response reading** – The reader reads, then the child who is beginning to read can read aloud a subsequent word, sentence, paragraph, or page. Basically, the adult reads and then the child reads the next section. How much is read by each person depends on the child's independent reading level and confidence.
- **Character part reading** – The adult and child read different character parts as in a play. Folk tales that have character parts such as *The Little Red Hen* and *The Three Little Pigs* are ideal for character part reading.
- **Reading in Unison** – The reader and the child read aloud together at the same time. For early readers, this is best done after a book has been previously read.

- **One word or close reading** – This works perfectly when you are reading a poem together that has simple rhyming lines. The word at the end of a line provides a rhymed clue for a word at the end of a subsequent line. The book, *Birds Being Birds*, by Donna Castle Richardson, is a simple poem with end rhyme that lends itself well to this strategy. The text of *Birds Being Birds* can also be sung. Singing the text facilitates memory and is also a fun activity that can be added to the repertoire of early literacy activities.



- **Refrains** – Children quickly learn repeated refrains and this is another way to have them orally participate in reading. The adult can point to a repetitive phrase in the book and the child can repeat it. *The Hungry Caterpillar* by Eric Carle, Jr., repeats “But he was still hungry.” In the book *The Teeny Tiny Tadpole*, the refrain is “The Teeny Tiny Tadpole swam quickly away.” The refrain appears over and over again throughout the book. After initial exposure to the story, children often naturally want to take over saying the refrains aloud.
- **Cumulative story sequence** – *I Know an Old Woman Who Swallowed a Fly* and *The Teeny Tiny Tadpole* are examples of books with cumulative language. In *The Teeny Tiny Tadpole*, the text from each page of the story is repeated and then added to on the following page as the tadpole gradually transforms into a frog. This type of story helps in remembering the sequence of events.



Interactive strategies allow the reader to adapt pacing to a natural learning progression for the child. Turn-taking reading supports the child as they develop confidence in sharing the reading process.





Step 3. In the third step of the 1, 2, 3, 4, and More Lessons, the adult and child revisit the text that has just been read to learn a reading skill in the context of the story such as comprehension, vocabulary, letter recognition, letter-sound awareness, and parts of stories.

This step in the lesson is designed to encourage the child to learn about reading and how books work. It can be a time to talk about what was read, build vocabulary, learn about letters and sounds, and begin to understand parts of stories. When a child is struggling with understanding a story or answering questions about it, go back and revisit the text and model how to find answers. It is critical for the adult to model how to solve reading problems. Talk about pictures in the book and how they may have given either correct or misleading clues about what was going on in the story. The person modeling should talk with the child about words that proved difficult. It is important for the adult to watch for patterns of difficulty and then focus on addressing them. Some common early reading skills to focus on are:

- Learning about the front and back of a book is basic, but important to know how books work for young children.
- Understanding the role of directionality in reading. Children need to learn the left-to-right progression of sentences, the top-to-bottom progression on a page, and the front to back progression of books.
- Remembering the story sequence and recalling characters and other important parts of the story.
- Understanding the meaning of words can be increased by defining and explaining new words to build the child's vocabulary. Go to the Internet or a dictionary to get the correct definition.
- Identifying letters. A good initial step is finding letters in the child's name, or other letters that are meaningful, in the book.
- Recognizing common sight words, simple words such as *the*, *I*, *we*, and *a*.

Beginning readers need to understand the basics of how to use books moving from front to back and looking at words from left-to-right. They

need to know letters make sounds that work together to form words, words are put together to make sentences, and sentences work together to tell a story or provide information. Children need to hear, use, see, and read the sounds in words. They need to also recognize letter sounds, including being able to distinguish sounds from one another. Decoding words, or what is often called phonics, can be very tedious for beginning readers. Some children catch on quickly while others need more time and instruction. Understanding that letter sounds are blended together to make words can be difficult. Teaching formal phonics skills can be held off until the child enters school.

In summary, this part of the lesson can be used to expand the child's knowledge. Revising the text and remembering the story and its parts is a good beginning. Adding information on new words can expand the child's knowledge. How book reading works can be taught by modeling the reading process. Learning letters and remembering some easy words can be fun for the child. Remember to explore and revisit the text by following the child's lead.



Step 4 – The fourth step of the 1-2-3-4 and More Lessons can make the story relevant and meaningful to the child's life. The reader and child make connections to everyday life.

The fourth step of the lesson cycle helps the child make connections to personal life experiences. Focus should be on the text instead of the pictures. This step should help the child make connections between the text and relevant life experiences in a meaningful way. Learning about people, places, and things through the text can be expanded upon. Discussion needs to focus on building understanding of the story content and how it might relate to a child's previous experiences. Some stories are just fun and other have real relevance to everyday life. Talk about ways problems in the story might be avoided. Ultimately, connecting a story to the child's everyday world and making the connection to prior knowledge or past experiences makes the book real to the child.

Modeling by reading with joy and enthusiasm helps children develop a love of books. An important part of the lesson is returning and revisiting the text so the child learns to check for understanding. When returning to the text, demonstrate how to find answers. Talk about what could really happen in the story. This part of the lesson continues to build on remembering the story. By hearing stories and listening to books being read, children come to understand characteristic of story elements. They learn that the basic form of a story includes a beginning, middle, and an end. Basic story elements include plots, characters, settings, and themes. These elements become meaningful when discussed in context.

Series books based on familiar characters can help children feel comfortable as they transition into reading independently, since lead characters behave in predictable ways and stories unfold in familiar patterns. When young readers know what to expect, it helps in comprehending text. It is important to introduce more complex stories as children mature in reading. Settings come alive in both pictures and descriptive text in the story. Themes or story topics that are found in literature, such as love and belonging, can be related to the reader's everyday life.



Step 5 - More – Ideas for activities that help the child respond creatively to reading a book. This can be a time to draw, sing, dramatize, write, or in some way allow the child to reconnect to the story.



A book can be made even more meaningful through enrichment using art, music, writing, and drama. The child can draw a favorite character or illustrate the story sequence in folded boxes on a sheet of paper. Stories with multiple characters can be acted out and dramatized. In the book, *Bird Being Birds* by Donna Castle Richardson, the story can be sung, recited, or dramatized. Basic colors of the birds can be drawn in

the order that they appear in the story. Different or favorite settings from the story can be drawn to represent the child's experiences. For older children, dictating or writing a story similar to the book by adapting or replicating characters, setting, plot, or theme is another possible activity. Many different ways of responding to books should be explored with children. This part of the lesson is a time to have fun, meaningful experiences with books.

This final step makes book selection even more important as the child reflects on the story and expands upon the experience through creative activities. Adults should select books that have lovely pictures that connect to text. Books with simple language patterns promote interaction between young children and the adult modeling the reading. In this step a good attitude toward books naturally can develop as the child associates positive experiences with the right book for reading and is nurtured through the developmental reading process.

In summary, the 1, 2, 3, 4, and More Lessons encourage the talking-thinking aloud process and provide opportunities to demonstrate how readers think and reflect upon books. Children's participation with a supportive adult reader provides a foundation for learning to read. Preschool children are eager to learn and enjoy one-on-one time with an adult. Adults who read fluently and enjoy it provide a model for learning about reading in a safe and pleasant learning environment. The process of PRRRRing through the book makes reading fun, interactive, and memorable. The 1-2-3-4 and More Lessons add more ideas for exploring books beyond the first reading.

Over time children progress toward being able to read independently as they acquire a wide range of strategies to fluently read aloud with confidence. Learning to be a fluent reader takes many years with experienced adults supporting and guiding the process. Children can begin by taking over the reading of simple parts of books and moving slowly toward reading sections and entire stories. Continue reading with and supporting children with books, especially after they start demonstrating a desire to



read independently. Gradually promote more independent reading as the child's confidence grows. Children vary in their ability to acquire the different skills in reading. The adult should be sensitive to when support is needed and when to encourage independent reading. The 1, 2, 3, 4, and More Lessons provide interactive strategies with special suggestions for the adult to inspire the young reader through positive interactions together.



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