

# Three Ways to Read a Book

We find this to be a foundational lesson before we introduce Read to Self. Its necessity became very clear one year as we were asking students to read to themselves and about half of our first graders chimed in, “I don't know how to read.” How could we possibly ask students to read independently if they truly did not possess reading skills?

At that time we would partner students or create a center for them to do, because they couldn't read words yet. We heard a similar responses from our older English Language Learners, just arriving to our country and not yet able to read English. Without books in the 30+ different languages in our schools we felt puzzled and frustrated.

As we researched beginning-reading acquisition, we discovered that children learn to read by engaging in the act of reading by “Reading the Pictures,” “Reading the Words,” and “Retelling a Familiar Story.”

With this in mind we begin our teaching each year with modeling “Three Ways to Read” using a short picture book. It sounds like this . . .

“Girls and boys, there are three ways to read, and I am going to show you how to do all three. First I am going to **read the pictures**. Let's see, the cover of this book has a big world and five different people on the front; I think this book is going to be about these five people. Here is the first page. Here are those five people again, and there are white houses in the background. They are holding a sign.” We continue through the story, talking about the pictures and connecting them from page to page, telling our own story. At the end of the reading we say, “Boys and girls, I just showed you one way to read, and that is by reading the pictures. I am going to write that down on our chart to remind us of the three ways to read.

“Now I am going to show you another way to read. I am going to **read the words**.” We then read the same book, but this time we read the words. At the end of the story, we remind the students that reading the words is another way to read and we add “Read the Words” to our chart of ways to read.

We then tell the students there is another way to read and that is to **retell a familiar story**. We use the same book and retell the story by looking at the pictures and saying what is happening.

The first time we did this, we didn't have anyone say, “I cannot read to myself, because I don't know how to read.” From that day forward, all students were able to be engaged in reading by reading the pictures, reading the words, or retelling a story. We also teach this lesson to older students as we want to remind them reading pictures is a critical strategy, especially if we are reading nonfiction, graphic novels, and some textbooks. So with our older students we model reading the pictures with one of these genres.



“3 Ways to Read a Book”



“3 Ways to Read a Book—Even in Intermediate”