The frequency of reading to children at a young age has a direct causal effect on their schooling outcomes regardless of their family background and home environment.

- Reading to children 3-5 days per week (compared to 2 or less) has the same effect on the child’s reading skills at age 4-5 as being six months older.
- Reading to them 6-7 days per week has the same effect on the child’s reading skills as them being almost 12 months older.
- Children who are read to more frequently at age 4-5 achieve higher scores on NAPLAN (National Assessment Program - Literacy and Numeracy) at ages 8 - 9.

Reading to children helps children learn and better understand new words.

- The vocabulary in picture books is more extensive than that found in child-directed speech and even adult-directed speech.
  - The larger and more diverse word base in books give children practice with decontextualized language, requiring them to make sense of ideas that are about something beyond the here and now.
- Listening to stories is positively associated with activation of brain areas supporting mental imagery and narrative comprehension.
  - Higher reading exposure is positively correlated with neural activation in the left-sided parietal-temporal-occipital association cortex (a “hub” region supporting semantic language processing).

Children also receive social and mental benefits from reading experience.

- Poor literacy achievement in the first and third grades predicted relatively high aggressive behavior in the third and fifth grades.
- The activity of reading offers young children a break from entertainment media.
  - 3–7 year-old children watch an average of two to three hours of television per day, with media related television activities such as video games and movies adding a half hour per day.