

ACTIVITY 3.1

Expression Practice Cards

Because stories come alive through your voice.

WELCOME

Reading aloud isn't just about the words on the page — it's about rhythm, tone, and expression. These cards invite you to experiment with your voice in playful ways that spark your child's curiosity, laughter, and engagement.

Think of them as mini warm-ups that turn reading time into theatre time. You don't need a dramatic flair or a background in performance — just a willingness to try something new and laugh when it doesn't go perfectly. That openness alone is a gift to your child.

Each card targets one small skill. One card, one session. Over time, those small experiments add up to something wonderful: a reading voice that's entirely your own.

HOW TO USE THESE CARDS

1

Pick one card per reading session. Keep it simple — focus on just one new skill, like changing your pitch or slowing down for suspense.

2

Read the Prompt aloud. Try using the tone or rhythm suggested. Encourage your child to mimic or join you if they'd like.

3

Use the Tip to guide your delivery. Small adjustments — a pause, a whisper, a smile — make a big difference in how stories feel.

4

Reflect together. After reading, talk about which voices or moments made the story most fun or interesting.

5

Celebrate progress, not perfection. The goal isn't performance — it's connection, confidence, and joy.

THE CARDS | Choose one per session

CARD 01



The Character Voice

PROMPT

"Pick one character in tonight's book and give them a distinct voice — high, low, gruff, squeaky. Stick with it every time they speak."

TIP

Start with just one character, not all of them. Consistency matters more than quality — your child will delight in recognising the voice before you even finish the sentence.

CARD 02



The Suspense Whisper

PROMPT

"Find the most exciting or scary moment in the book. Drop your voice to a near-whisper as you approach it — then pause before the big reveal."

TIP

The power is in the pause, not the whisper. Let the silence do the work. Count silently to two before you continue — your child will lean right in.

CARD 03



Slow & Fast

PROMPT

"Find one slow, tender moment and one exciting, action-packed moment. Read them at completely different speeds — slow as honey, fast as a race."

TIP

Contrast is everything. The faster part only feels fast because of the slow part before it. Exaggerate both — you can't really go too slow or too fast in a picture book.

CARD 04



The Tender Tone

PROMPT

"Find a moment of sadness, worry, or tenderness. Read it softly and slowly — let your face reflect what the character is feeling."

TIP

Children notice your face as much as your voice. Let your expression lead — soften your eyes, relax your jaw. Your child will mirror the emotion without even realising it.

CARD 05

? The Wondering Voice

PROMPT

"When a character faces a problem or surprise, read that line as a genuine question — let your voice lift with curiosity, as if you don't know what comes next either."

TIP

Even if you've read the book a hundred times, pretend you're reading it for the first time. Your genuine curiosity is contagious — and it models exactly the thinking readers do.

CARD 06

;) The Giggle Voice

PROMPT

"Find something silly, absurd, or unexpected. Read it with a barely-contained smile in your voice — like you're trying not to laugh."

TIP

Laughter is the fastest route to engagement. Let yourself be genuinely amused. Shared laughter over a book is one of the most powerful reading memories a child can have.

CARD 07

! Big & Bold

PROMPT

"Find a moment of triumph, excitement, or announcement. Read it with full volume and energy — big arms welcome."

TIP

You don't need to shout — you need to expand. Open your chest, lift your chin, and let the words take up space. Big physical energy translates directly into how stories feel.

CARD 08

>> Echo & Repeat

PROMPT

"When you hit a repeated phrase or refrain, invite your child to say it with you. Let them lead the echo — you follow their energy."

TIP

This turns listening into active participation. The moment your child anticipates the refrain before you say it, they're reading. That's the spark you're looking for.