

Building Readers®

How Families Can Help Children Become Better Readers

SETA Head Start

Alma Hawkins, S.S.P.I. Specialist

Help your child love books

Resolve to help your little one learn to love books this year! Habits formed during childhood are likely to carry over to adulthood. So why wait? To build your child's love of reading:

- **Be flexible.** Never demand that she read for a certain length of time. Instead, follow her cues when sharing stories. If she gets bored and wants to stop, let her.
- **Be enthusiastic.** Show your child how wonderful books are. Have her “catch” you reading for pleasure. Talk to her about all the terrific stories you can't wait to share with her.
- **Be available.** Try to say yes whenever your child asks to read with you—even if you're busy! If you really can't take the time to read with your child that second, make an “appointment” to read with her later—and be sure to keep it.
- **Be a model.** If you're following a recipe for tonight's dinner, have your child look at pictures in the cookbook while you work. When you make a grocery list, post it on the refrigerator where she can see it. Show her that words are used every day.



iStockphoto

Become a stronger storyteller

Reading aloud may not be rocket science, but that doesn't mean it comes naturally! To keep your youngster excited and engaged when you're reading out loud to him:

- **Let him participate.** If you're reading a favorite tale, skip a sentence once in a while. Have your child chime in with the missing phrase.
- **Pause occasionally.** Ask your child, “What happens next?”
- **Get him to pitch in.** Have your child turn the pages or hold the book.
- **Don't skim over the artwork.** Take time to admire the illustrations. Talk about the jazzy colors and silly characters.
- **Challenge him.** Every so often, share a more complex tale.

Source: Jim Trelease, “The Do's and Don'ts of Read-Aloud,” Trelease-on-Reading.com, www.trelease-on-reading.com/rah-ch4.html.

Lend an ear to your child



Listening skills play a big part in language learning. So help your youngster develop hers by:

- **Speaking** to her slowly and clearly.
- **Having** her repeat what you said if you're not sure she heard you.
- **Getting** down on her level and making eye contact when you speak.
- **Asking** her questions about the stories you read.
- **Talking** with her often.

Looky here!



Struggling to find good picture books for your budding bookworm? Log onto Lookybook (www.lookybook.com) and flip through popular titles—from start to finish—for free. It's a great way to “try before you buy!”

Inspire your reluctant reader



Don't drag your child kicking and screaming to story time! Instead, motivate your reluctant reader by:

- **Being diverse.** Books are fabulous, but share magazines, poems and comics, too.
- **Pumping up the volume.** For fun, listen to audio books together. They're a valuable reading tool.
- **Exploring his interests.** Figure out what your child loves, and find stories on that topic.

Source: “Motivating Your Reluctant Reader,” Capital Community News, www.capitalcommunitynews.com/publications/dcnorth/2008_February/44-45_DCN_0208.pdf.

Enjoy the art of rhyming

Rhyming is a building block of reading and spelling. Use art to help your child learn about rhyming. Here's how:

- **Go to the drawing board.** Sketch a simple scene (such as a house with a tree and a cloud) on a dry-erase board. Ask your child, "Can you erase the thing that rhymes with *mouse*?" Continue with other rhymes until the board is blank.
- **Make rhyming dice.** Cover two square boxes with plain paper. Cut 12 pictures from a magazine and glue one onto each of the boxes' surfaces. Have your child roll the dice. See if she can name a rhyme for whichever pictures she rolls.

Source: "Rhyming Words," PreKinders.com, www.prekinders.com/rhyming.htm.

Reading and songs make beautiful music together

Think music has nothing to do with reading? Think again! Music and songs can play a big role in your child's journey toward reading readiness by:

- **Teaching him** the "rhythm" of language. In many songs, the music is written to go along with the lyrics. It's not the other way around. So when your child hears a song's rhythm, he's also hearing each word's rhythm.
- **Upping the excitement.** Most preschoolers love clapping, banging on instruments and moving to music. Combining these activities with stories only adds to the fun.



istockphoto

- **Making words** more powerful. Bold music can turn even a basic phrase into something special.

Source: Susan Kenney, "The Power of a Song," *General Music Today*, Vol. 21, No. 2, www.menc.org/documents/journals/gmt/GMTwinter2008.pdf.



Books to delight your early reader

Mouse Paint by Ellen Stoll Walsh (Red Wagon Books). What can three white mice do with three jars of paint? Plenty! Especially when they discover just how "colorful" mixing hues can be!

A to Z by Sandra Boynton (Little Simon). From an "aardvark admiring" to a "zebra zigzagging," these wild critters are busy, busy, busy! Who knew the alphabet could be so full of furry fun?

Crafts can promote writing



Writing is an important part of reading. Teach your budding reader the basics of writing by:

- **Making macaroni letters.** Just fill one bowl with dry macaroni and another with pieces of dry spaghetti. On a sheet of paper or a place mat, have your child form letters with the pasta (use macaroni for the curves and spaghetti for the straight parts). (To make a reusable alphabet, let him glue his creations onto index cards.)
- **Making a pencil holder.** Recycle that empty juice can—turn it into a pencil holder! Wrap the clean, dry can with construction or contact paper, then let your little writer decorate it with stickers, markers or glitter.



Q: My preschooler already takes good care of her books. How else can I make her a responsible reader?

A: By letting her be in charge of story time. Have your preschooler choose which books to read and where to sit while sharing stories. It may help her feel more "grown up" to take the lead on something as important as story time!

Do you have a question about reading? Email readingadvisor@parent-institute.com.

"Helping your child learn to read is a gift of yourself, a true gift from the heart."

—Sherry Ann Perry

Building Readers®
How Families Can Help Children Become Better Readers
 Publisher: John H. Wherry, Ed.D.
 Managing Editor: Pat Hodgdon.
 Editor: Jennifer McGovern. Writer: Holly Smith.
 Copyright © 2009, The Parent Institute® (a division of NIS, Inc.)
 P.O. Box 7474, Fairfax Station, VA 22039-7474
 1-800-756-5525, ISSN: 1533-3299
www.parent-institute.com