

Building Readers®

How Families Can Help Children Become Better Readers

SETA Head Start
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Keep your preschooler learning this summer

Preschool may be out for the year, but you can still fill your child's summer with reading fun. Try to:

- **Create theme weeks.** From "outer space" to "lizards," set aside several days to focus on a topic. Once you and your child have chosen one, visit the library to find books on your subject. Read stories about it, draw pictures or even help your child "write" her own book!
- **Learn one new word daily.** Have your child close her eyes, open the dictionary and point to a word. That's today's word! Explain it to your child. See how many times you and your child can use it throughout the day.



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*"Books are lighthouses erected in the great sea of time."
—Edwin P. Whipple*

You are critical to your child's school success

Research doesn't lie: Parents play a huge role in their children's success in school. In fact, one study found that among the highest-achieving students, 97% said their parents encouraged them to do well.

What does this mean for your child as he goes through preschool—and beyond? It means you're hugely important to how well he does (and will do). To keep him on the path to school success:

- **Read** with your child every day.
- **Get involved** at his school.
- **Send** him to school rested and fed.
- **Read** every handout or paper he brings home.

Source: "Out-of-School Influences and Academic Success," Answers.com, www.answers.com/topic/out-of-school-influences-and-academic-success.

Encourage language learning



Conversation is one of the best—and most convenient—tools for building your child's language skills. To help your youngster get the most from your chats:

- **Make eye contact.** It'll show him that he has your full attention.
- **Share interesting parts** of your day. Let him into your world a little!
- **Really listen when he talks.** Resist the urge to multitask while he's speaking.

Inspire a love of books



Need help finding great books to share with your child? Grab a copy of *Best Books for Kids Who (Think They) Hate to Read* by Laura Backes. In it, you'll find page-turners for everyone from budding bookworms to "big kid" readers!

Drop by your local library



Make the most of your local library! Along with getting your preschooler her own library card, be sure to:

- **Find out where** your library shelves the easy-to-read books your child most enjoys.
- **Check out more** than just books. Many libraries also lend movies, CDs or even toys and puppets.
- **Visit frequently.** Make library trips a regular part of your week.

Source: "Making the Most of Your Library," Hennepin County Library, Minnetonka, MN, www.hclib.org/BirthTo6/EarlyLit_Partnership.cfm.

Try activities that build attention span

It isn't always easy to get a preschooler to sit still for an entire story. But you can use games and activities to build your child's attention span. Research shows that preschool children learn best through play. Here are some ideas:

- **Teach your child a nursery rhyme.** Repeat it until your child can fill in the blanks or say it back to you.
- **Tap a simple beat on a table top.** Have your child try to mimic it.
- **Have your child search through books and magazines** for certain shapes, objects and letters.

Source: Lee Hausner, Ph.D. and Jeremy Scholsberg, *Teaching Your Child Concentration*, ISBN: 0-89526-394-7 (Lifeline Press, an imprint of Regnery Publishing, 1-888-219-4747, www.regnery.com/lifeline/lifeline.html).

Get excited about reading aloud!

If you merely “go through the motions” when reading to your child, it's time to kick your performance up a notch! Make story time more exciting for both of you by:

- **Being expressive.** Don't stare blankly at the book when reading. Use your eyes to show emotion. Let them get wide ... narrow ... wider still! Immerse yourself in the “feeling” of the story.
- **Using the right voice.** It's good to be expressive or passionate with your voice, but don't make it overly cutesy or grating.



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- **Taking cues from the text.** Is a character whispering? Then you should whisper. Is he shouting? Get LOUD! Varying your volume will keep your child interested in the story.

Source: Mem Fox, “And Do It Like This,” MemFox.com, www.memfox.com/reading-magic-and-do-it-like-this.

Q: My preschooler acts like her scribbles are real words. Should I play along?
A: Yes! Scribbling is a vital step toward learning to write, and it is real writing to your child. That is, she's making an honest effort to represent words with her scribbles. So don't discourage her—become her cheerleader! “What a neat story you wrote! Can you read it to me?”

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



Books to delight your early reader

The Moon by Martha E. H. Rustad (Pebble Books). What's that strange white orb in the sky? And what makes it shine? Find out in this small, simple book about the big, fascinating moon!

A Visitor for Bear by Bonny Becker (Candlewick). Bear says he doesn't want any visitors in his house—he even has a sign! But a mouse just won't take the hint. Where will the mouse pop up next?

Log on for rhyming fun



Boost your child's rhyming skills with online games. (He'll be having so much fun he'll never suspect he's learning!) Here are two good ones to play with your child, on your home computer or at your local library:

1. **Digby Mole's rhyming game** (www.bbc.co.uk/schools/laac/words/dg3.shtml). Choose from three difficulty levels and start rhyming. With each correct answer, the wee brown mole digs a few more worms. See what he does with them at the end of each round! Eww!
2. **Gus and Inky's Underwater Adventure** (www.getreadytoread.org/games/game2/index.html). Click on “Rhyme Time” to help Gus the Bunny learn about rhyming. He has to write a hip-hop song for Inky's party, and he needs your help!

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