

# Building Readers®

How Families Can Help Children Become Better Readers

SETA Head Start

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## Promote a love of reading

**K**ids who adore books as toddlers often become lifelong readers. So encourage your rookie reader to really love those terrific tales. He'll most likely enjoy reading if you:

- **Make it part of his daily life.** Sharing stories shouldn't be a once-in-awhile event! Choose a regular time to read together. Many parents read to their children at night. But if your child seems more excited about reading in the morning or afternoon, take advantage of his interest then.
- **Get into character.** When you're reading about the Big, Bad Wolf, "huff and puff" like the furry fiend. If the Wicked Witch is speaking, use your most convincing cackle.
- **Celebrate with books.** The next time a holiday or birthday rolls around, be sure at least some of those wrapped boxes are filled with books. After all, what's more gift-worthy than great stories?

**Source:** "Help Your Children to Love Reading," National Ag Safety Database, [www.nasdonline.org/docs/d001501-d001600/d001582/d001582.html](http://www.nasdonline.org/docs/d001501-d001600/d001582/d001582.html).



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*"A book is a gift you can open again and again."*

—Garrison Keillor

### Read-aloud stories don't need to be simple

When looking for good books to read to your child, don't be afraid to think beyond her reading level. In other words, it's fine to share stories that are a bit over her head. By hearing these more "sophisticated" stories, your child will be:

- **Exposed** to new vocabulary.
- **Introduced** to new concepts.
- **Inspired** to explore other higher-level books.

Set an example by reading in *your* spare time. Say things like, "This is Mommy's book," and "I like to read." If your child wants to hear a bit of what you're reading, go right ahead!

**Source:** "Reading Aloud to Children," Teachers' Mentor, [http://teachersmentor.com/reading3/read\\_aloud.html](http://teachersmentor.com/reading3/read_aloud.html).

## Make a visit to the library



Heading to your local library for the first time? Ask the librarian for a tour. It's an excellent way for you and your child to discover what the place has to offer. To get the most from your visit, also ask for:

- **Kid-friendly book** suggestions.
- **The dates** of upcoming story hours.
- **A library card application** for your child.

**Source:** "Visit Your Local Library!" | Colorin Colorado! [www.colorincolorado.org/families/letsread/libraryvisit](http://www.colorincolorado.org/families/letsread/libraryvisit).

## Log on for reading games



Language learning should be fun! So help your preschooler log onto Seussville Games ([www.randomhouse.com/seussville/games](http://www.randomhouse.com/seussville/games)). From "Horton's Who Hunt" to "Elephant Ball," it's full of free, reading-rich activities.

## Encourage listening skills



Every time your child hears you speak, she moves further down the road of language learning. But if she's not paying attention, she may be losing out. To sharpen her listening skills and help her concentrate:

- **Look her in the eye.** Get down on your child's level when speaking.
- **Speak slowly and clearly.** You may be used to chatting a mile a minute with friends, but dial it back for your child.
- **Whisper.** If your child isn't listening, lower your voice. The more softly you speak, the more she'll have to concentrate on your words.

## Be aware of how to spot language delays

All kids stumble sometimes when it comes to language and reading. So how do you know if yours might have an actual delay? While there's no easy answer, common signs of language-learning difficulties include:

- **Delayed speaking.** Most kids learn to speak in simple phrases by age two. Children who don't do this may have language-learning issues.
- **Trouble with the alphabet.** Learning the ABCs is a basic part of language development. Kids who can't learn their ABCs may struggle to read later.
- **No awareness of rhymes.** Rhyming demonstrates the different sounds letters make. Youngsters who don't pick up on rhymes may develop reading problems down the road.

If you are concerned that your child may have a language delay, talk to your family doctor or your child's teacher.

**Source:** David A. Sousa, *How the Brain Learns to Read*, ISBN: 1-4129-0601-6 (Corwin Press, www.corwinpress.com).

## Physical activities can help with reading readiness

A child's success in learning to read in school is tied to how much she's already learned about reading at home. Prepare your child to read with prereading activities like these:

- **Have your child** use her body, clay or blocks to make the shapes of letters.
- **Point out letters** and sounds. "That's a *mouse*. It starts with M. It sounds like *mmm*."
- **Let your child** fill a container with items that start with the sound of a certain letter: buttons for B, leaves for L, etc.



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- **Swing and rhyme.** Push your child on the swing and say a verse, like "Up you go." To earn another push, your child must make a rhyme: "It will snow."

**Source:** Melissa Fay Greene, "The Alphabet Mysteries," [www.melissafaygreene.com/pages/alphabet.html](http://www.melissafaygreene.com/pages/alphabet.html).



**Q:** My preschooler doesn't always feel like reading stories. What other "bookish" activities can we do?

**A:** There's no limit to the reading-related fun you can have. Listen to audio books.

Act out favorite stories with finger puppets. Host a "book character" tea party using your child's stuffed toys. Make bookmarks. Just don't give up on story time altogether!

Do you have a question about reading? Email [readingadvisor@parent-institute.com](mailto:readingadvisor@parent-institute.com).



## Books to delight your early reader

**Peggy Pig's Dirty Day** by Debbie Rivers-Moore (Backpack Books). It's tough staying clean, especially in the barnyard! Will Peggy ever take a bath? Find out in this bold, splashy, "touch and feel" story.

**Daddy Kisses** by Anne Gutman (Chronicle Books). Do daddies love their babies? Yes, they do! Watch as they snuggle with their little ones in this small, sweet story for small, sweet readers.

## Music can make a difference



Music doesn't just soothe the savage breast. It may improve your toddler's language know-how (and make him smarter overall!).

Studies show that early music education:

- **Helps with brain development.** Musical training especially seems to benefit the left side of the brain. That's the side involved in language processing.
- **Boosts creativity.** Kids exposed to the arts—including music—may learn to think more creatively. This can lead to sharper problem-solving skills.
- **Increases school performance.** Youngsters trained in the arts perform better on standardized tests. They also tend to earn better grades throughout their school careers.

**Source:** "Twelve Benefits of Music Education," Children's Music Workshop, [www.childrensmusicworkshop.com/advocacy/12benefits.html](http://www.childrensmusicworkshop.com/advocacy/12benefits.html).

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