

# Building Readers®

How Families Can Help Children Become Better Readers

SETA Head Start

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

## Short reading activities work

In just 15 minutes, you can lay the groundwork that will enable your child to become a successful reader. Try these everyday activities:

- **Around the house.** Place large labels on items in your child's room. Help her understand that words are connected to ordinary items.
- **While waiting.** Pack books and snacks in your briefcase or purse. When stuck in line or at the doctor's office with your child, explore your stashed treasures.
- **At bedtime.** If you're too tired to read aloud to your child, turn on an audio recording of a favorite story.
- **When you're traveling.** Call home at bedtime and read a book to your child.
- **When your child wants to stay up later.** Allow her 15 minutes more—of reading time.



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**Source:** "Fifteen-Minute Reading Activities," Family Education Network/PTA Connection, <http://news.fen.com/article/0,1120,63-15229,00.html>.

*"Oh, magic hour, when a child first knows  
she can read printed words!"*

—A Tree Grows in Brooklyn, 1943

### Demonstrate, don't teach proper grammar

Your little one can't wait to tell you about his wonderful trip to the park. But when he does, he butchers every language and grammar rule you know.

Instead of making him feel like he's speaking incorrectly, try this subtle way of nudging his grammar in the right direction:

- **If he says:** "Grandpa and I *goed* to the playground! I *swinged* on the swings and *slided* on the slide!"
- **You say:** "You *went* to the playground, *swung* on the swings and *slid* down the slide? That's terrific!"

This way, he'll hear the proper way of saying things without feeling like he did something wrong.

**Source:** "Grammar Lessons—Preschool Style," The Nursery, [www.thenursery.com/plan/activities-kids/grammar-lessons-preschool-style](http://www.thenursery.com/plan/activities-kids/grammar-lessons-preschool-style).

## 'Write' way to prepare to read

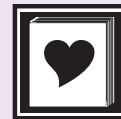


Encourage your child to scribble. When he scribbles, he is pretending to write.

And that's an important part of getting ready to read! For example:

- **If your child is playing house,** give him a pencil and paper and ask him to make a shopping list.
- **If your child is watching you** write a letter, encourage him to "write" one, too.

### Top books are great gifts



Put books at the top of your gift-giving list this year. For a rundown of the best titles of 2009,

visit the American Library Association's website ([www.ala.org](http://www.ala.org)). Search for "Notable Children's Books" and let your holiday shopping begin!

## Make family reading time more dramatic and exciting



Put a new spin on family reading time—make it theatrical! To create some good-natured "drama" the next time the whole gang shares stories together:

- **Act it out.** Instead of reading that same tale for the hundredth time, try acting it out as a family. Add simple props or costumes, too. And don't be afraid to ham it up a bit!
- **Host a "book and movie" night.** After sharing a favorite children's story, cuddle up and watch the movie version together.

## Your child benefits from the stories you share

What's so great about the stories you tell your child? Plenty! Along with boosting her language-learning skills, stories can:

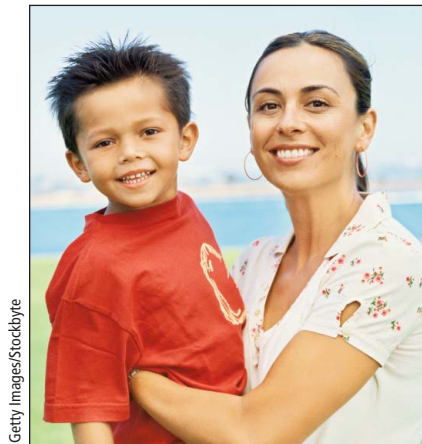
- **Entertain.** A well-told tale is a pleasure to hear.
- **Spark the imagination.** See if the yarn you spin spurs your child to invent one of her own.
- **Teach.** Stories are perfect for introducing “life lessons” in a not-too-heavy way.
- **Introduce new words.** Stories are natural vocabulary builders.
- **Strengthen bonds.** The next time your child messes up, tell a tale about that crazy thing you did when you were a kid. It may make her feel better—and feel more connected to you!

**Source:** Christine Durham, *Chasing Ideas: The Fun of Freeing Your Child's Imagination*, ISBN: 1-84310-460-1 (Jessica Kingsley Publishers, www.jkp.com).

## Love and support influence your child's learning

Your child's progress in school doesn't just depend on what happens in class. It depends on *you*. That's because you're the biggest influence on his overall school success. To help him flourish in preschool and beyond:

- **Make learning a priority.** Let your child know that education matters. Ask about what he's learning in preschool. And when he tells you? Get excited!
- **Surround him with words.** Be sure your child has access to books and other reading materials. Read together often.
- **Love him.** Never miss a chance to tell your child how much he means to you. It may inspire him to try that much harder in school!



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## Books to delight your early reader

**A Visitor for Bear** by Bonny Becker (Walker Books Ltd.). Sure, Bear may have a “NO visitors allowed” sign on his door. But that doesn't mean Mouse can't still try—over and over—to be the big guy's friend!

**Papá and Me** by Arthur Dorros (HarperCollins Children's). “Good morning!’ I call to Papá. ‘Buenos días,’ Papá says back to me.” Will it be a happy, loving day for the young boy and his daddy? ¡Sí!

## Two hours of TV is enough



How much TV should children watch? According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, no more than two hours daily. To help your child stay within the limits:

- **Keep** the TV out of his bedroom.
- **Insist** on no TV during meals.
- **Keep** books and other “non-screen” diversions on hand.
- **Make** a calendar. Have your child put a sticker on each day that is TV-free. Once your child earns a certain number of stickers, reward him with an activity you can do together.
- **Check out** *The Berenstain Bears and Too Much TV* from your library. Read it to your child. Then talk with your child about why it's better to limit TV watching.

**Source:** “How TV Affects Your Child,” KidsHealth, [http://kidshealth.org/parent/positive/family/tv\\_affects\\_child.html#](http://kidshealth.org/parent/positive/family/tv_affects_child.html#).



**Q:** My preschooler loves learning new words. How can I boost her vocabulary without seeming like I'm drilling her?

**A:** Expose her to words in everyday ways! When you're running errands, point out names on billboards. If you're in the checkout line at the grocery store, read the product labels around you aloud. At home, skim the newspaper headlines for unusual words to share with your child.

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

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