

Building Readers®

How Families Can Help Children Become Better Readers

SETA Head Start

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Begin building independent readers early

It's never too soon to start helping your child to be an independent reader. Here are some things you can do now to build that independence—even *before* your child can read:

- **Make books** an important part of your child's life. Use picture books to play "point and name" games with your child. Then let her look at her books by herself.
- **Ask your child** to "read" familiar stories to you by telling you what is happening in the pictures.
- **Encourage your child** to do several other simple activities independently each day. For example, let her work puzzles, stack objects or sort colors by herself.



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Source: Heather Goldsmith, "Independent Reading Part One," Suite101.com, www.suite101.com/article.cfm/6400/49097.

"Early literacy is what children know about reading and writing before they can actually read or write."

—Patricia Froehlich

Know what to look for when selecting books

What are the best books for your child? The ones he'll listen to! Just like all children are different, all books are different, too. There's no one book that will be "perfect" for every child. And there are hundreds of choices!

Next time you're at the bookstore or library and wondering which titles to choose, remember that preschoolers tend to enjoy:

- **Books about kids their own age.**
- **Stories with lots of repetition.**
- **Bold, dynamic pictures.**
- **Books about animals.**
- **Happy endings.**
- **Tales with goofy words or sounds.**

Source: Marilyn Lopes, "Selecting Books for Children," National Network for Child Care, www.nncc.org/Literacy/select.books.html.

Vary voices during read-alouds



You may not think of yourself as a vocal whiz, but that's exactly what you are! When telling a story or reading to your child, you can make your voice loud or soft, fast or slow, high or low. You can add sound effects like *boom!* For even more dramatic flair, you can "pause" the story during suspenseful parts.

These vocal tricks add interest and excitement to the story—which will make story time more enjoyable for your child.

Source: Mem Fox, *Reading Magic*, ISBN: 0-15-601076-3 (Harcourt, www.harcourt.com).

Use common-sense reviews



Is that book or TV show really okay for your child? Check out the reviews from Common Sense Media (www.commonsensemedia.org) to find out. It's a great way to learn which titles are—and are not—appropriate for young children.

Study finds more ways to improve reading skills



When parents read with kids, we know it boosts reading skills! Now a study finds that having lots of books at home also helps. Encouraging children to play with reading materials and games is also good. Even an orderly, less chaotic home with routines (like a regular bedtime) can improve reading success.

Source: Debra Lau Whelan, "An Orderly Home Affects Early Literacy Skills, Study Says," *School Library Journal*, www.schoollibraryjournal.com/article/CA6638990.html.

These common words are 'outta sight'!

Your preschooler probably has a long way to go on the road to reading. But there are plenty of things you can do now to help her become a fluent reader later. One of the simplest is to teach her *sight words* or *Dolch words* (short, common words she should eventually know “on sight”). These words can’t be sounded out, so they must be learned by sight.

There are only 220 high-frequency sight words, but they make up *half* of all written English! They include words like:

- **the**
- **and**
- **to**
- **is**
- **you**
- **it**
- **are**
- **of**
- **with**
- **in**
- **go**
- **said**

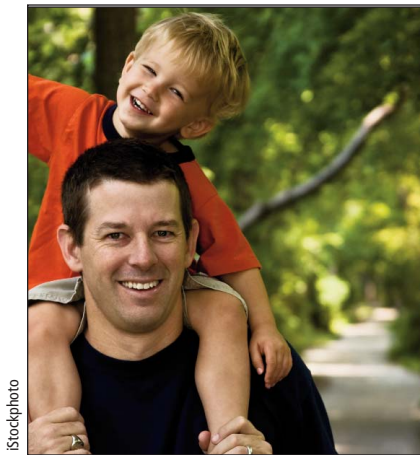
What’s the best way to help your child learn these words? Read to her, of course!

Source: Linda K. Rath, Ed.D. and Louise Kennedy, *The Between the Lions Book for Parents*, ISBN: 0-06-051027-7 (HarperCollins, www.harpercollins.com).

Head outdoors for alphabet fun in your neighborhood

Spring days were made for being outside! Get out of the house and go on an “ABC walk” with your child. Here’s how:

- 1. Choose letters.** Write five letters in a single column on an index card. (You don’t have to start with A, B and C. Let your child pick the letters.) Bring the card and a pen along on your walk.
- 2. Explore the neighborhood.** Help your child find things that begin with each letter on your card. Write each object’s name next to the appropriate letter.



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- 3. Talk about it.** When you get home, chat about your adventure—and about the sounds letters make.



Q: My preschooler is kind of clumsy when it comes to holding her crayons. What should I do?

A: Work with your child to strengthen her fine motor skills. The stronger her “small muscle” movements are, the better able she may be to control crayons and pencils. You can boost fine motor skills by having your child:

- **Play** with clay.
- **Stack** blocks.
- **Put** beads on a string.
- **Turn** pages of books.
- **Sort** and fold laundry.
- **Button** and zip clothes.

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



Books to delight your early reader

Kiki’s Blankie by Janie Bynum (Sterling Publishing). Kiki the monkey never goes anywhere without her polka-dotted blanket. But when her blanket flies into the clutches of a crocodile, will Kiki be able to rescue it?

Discovering Nature’s Alphabet by Krystina Castella and Brian Boyl (Heyday Books). The stunning photographs showcase “letters” formed by plants and animals in nature. Pore over this book, then take your preschooler outside to look for nature’s “letters” together!

One Weighs a Ton by Salina Yoon (Running Press Kids). This touch-and-feel book uses rhymes to help children practice counting from one to 10. Interesting animal facts are sprinkled throughout—find out why elephants have big ears, what dinosaur is the closest relative of the chicken, and more.

Show your preschooler how to learn from books



Having frequent conversations with your child is an important way to help him develop his language skills. Talk with him about all kinds of things. Listen to your child when he talks and take time to answer his questions carefully.

If you don’t know the answer to a question your child asks, have him help you as you look it up in a book. You’ll be showing him what can be learned from books.

Source: U.S. Department of Education, “Chatting with Children,” *Helping Your Child Become a Reader*, www.ed.gov/parents/academic/help/reader/part5.html#cwc.

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