

BUILDING READERS®

How Families Can Help Children Get Ready to Read

Show your child how important reading is to your entire family

Reading shouldn't always be a solo act! Involve your whole family in preparing your child to be a reader. To make language learning a family affair:

- **Share family history.** Ask siblings, aunts, uncles, grandparents and cousins to tell your child stories about your family's past.
- **Create a reading nook.** Set aside a comfy spot at home where everyone can plop down with a book. Have a family reading time at least once a week—everyone gets together and reads!
- **Read all day long.** Look at street signs. While grocery shopping, ask your child to help you find specific products. Even if he can't read yet, he can look for the *k* in *ketchup* or the *b* in *bread*.



Source: "10 Tips for Parents of Young Children," Reading is Fundamental.

"The things I want to know are in books."

—Abraham Lincoln

Fill your home with letters and words

It's important to expose your child to letters and words—even before she can read them. She will begin to recognize the shapes of the letters and to understand how letters combine to make different words.

Here are some things you can do:

- **Hang an alphabet poster** in your child's room.
- **Label your child's pictures.** For example, if she draws a dog, write the word *dog* under the picture.
- **Look at many kinds of reading material**, including magazines and newspapers. Encourage your child to look at the pictures while you read her the captions.
- **Have your child help you make** grocery lists or to-do lists. Say the words out loud as you write them and talk about the letters each word contains.

The public library is a key resource

The public library is a great place for your child to develop important literacy skills and make positive associations with books, reading and learning.



Libraries provide places for children to have print-rich and story-filled experiences. Research shows that the more your child is exposed to reading and literacy, the more prepared he'll be for school and for life.

Source: "Preschool 0-5: Talking Points for Public Libraries," American Library Association.

Raising a reader begins at birth

Your child is never too young to enjoy books and being read to. When you read aloud with your child daily, she develops important brain capacity. You're also creating a special bond between the two of you.



Source: C. Stuckenschneider, "Making the Most of Parent Involvement, Raising Readers," *emissourian.com*, niswc.com/parentreading.

Talking assists your child's reading



When you talk with your child, you are helping him practice his oral (spoken) language skills. And strong readers need to have strong oral language skills.

Your child needs to hear lots of words at home in order to develop his language skills. Hearing lots of new words will help him learn to figure out what those words mean by the way you use them in conversation.

Source: L. Lynn, "Language-Rich Home and School Environments Are Key to Reading Success," Harvard Education Letter.

Ask questions to develop your child's higher order thinking skills

Advanced thinking skills will help your child in school and in life. When your child builds her critical thinking skills, she will be able to analyze, critique and evaluate information that she reads or hears. Give your child some practice by asking her questions in different situations.



For example, when reading together, ask:

- **What do you think** will happen next?
- **Why do you think** the story ended the way it did?
- **Why do you think** the author chose to include a particular event or element in the story?

When going somewhere new, ask:

- **How is this place** different from somewhere you've been before?
- **Does this place remind you** of somewhere we've been?

Source: C.A. Simon, "How To Encourage Higher Order Thinking," ReadWriteThink.

Promote reading alternatives to screen time

Experts recommend that children ages two to four watch no more than two hours of quality television programming a day. Instead of watching TV, encourage your child to:

- **Listen to an audio book.** This can be a recording of you reading his favorite book or one you check out from the library.
- **Work on a puzzle,** which builds his cognitive skills.
- **Read, read, read!** Whether your child is looking at a book and "reading" on his own or you are reading with him, the more exposure he has to books, the better.

Source: W. Yu, "Limiting TV Time for Preschoolers," WebMD.



Q: My four-year-old uses the same basic words over and over. Besides reading to him, how can I improve his language skills?

A: In addition to reading, expose your child to new places. Take him to the zoo, a park or a construction site and have him describe what he sees. Use different words yourself. For example,

you might describe the bath water as *soapy* instead of simply as *warm*. Another tip is to avoid using baby talk.

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

Make new rhymes from old favorites

When your child plays with words, she is building key skills for reading. Try this rhyming activity together: Sing a favorite song with your child, like "Mary Had a Little Lamb." Then sing it again—but this time, change some of the words. For example, "Mary had a little cat. Its feet were icy cold." Challenge your child to make up new words to finish the rhyme.



Source: D.T. Dodge and C. Heroman, *Building Your Baby's Brain: A Parent's Guide to the First Five Years*.

Books to delight your early reader

- ***When Randolph Turned Rotten*** by Charise Mericle Harper. Randolph and Ivy are best friends who do everything together. But Randolph isn't happy when Ivy gets invited to an all-girls sleepover party, so he devises a plan.
- ***The Dot*** by Peter H. Reynolds. Vashti can't figure out what to draw during art class, so she puts a dot on her paper. When her teacher tells her to sign the page, her dot is transformed into a work of art!
- ***Wild About Books*** by Judy Sierra. When librarian Molly McGrew accidentally drives her bookmobile into the zoo, all the animals decide they want to learn to read.



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Published nine times a year, September–May, in two age-appropriate versions: Reading Readiness and Elementary School. Each available in English and Spanish. **School Building Sale Price (new subscribers only): \$229. Additional versions after first, add \$129 each.** Includes rights to full print reproduction and electronic distribution to the parents at your school. Subscription begins the date order is processed. Call for school district rates.

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