



# Raising a Reader

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As parents, we want our children to be safe and healthy. We want them to be happy. And we want our kids to learn whatever they need to succeed. High on everyone's list of essential skills are reading and writing. Here are some things - simple and powerful - that a parent can do.\*

## **Talk, sing, and play with your child.**

Expand on what the child says. (When your toddler says "Duck!" you might respond with "Do you want your yellow duck?") Talk while you do simple everyday things together - bathing, eating, chores and errands, watching TV, riding in the car or on the bus. Recite nursery rhymes and so finger plays, games and action songs such as patty-cake and "This Little Pig Went to Market," frequently repeating the child's favorites. Describe the child's activities.

## **Make time to read together each day.**

Don't forget reading time with dad or granddad (or other men in the child's family or circle of friends). Since teachers and librarians whom young children meet are usually women, some boys start thinking of reading as a "girl thing" and turn off to books and reading. Bring a few books when you take kids along on errands, especially those where you're likely to have time on your hands.

## **Choose books with care.**

As you look through possible book choices, involve your child in deciding what to bring home. Look for books that relate to what's happening in the child's life at the time, whether it's family trip or a new experience such as starting school.

## **Surround your child with reading material.**

Consider subscribing to a good children's magazine. Kids love having something come in the mail for them! Also, libraries often loan children's magazines. Help your preschooler create a book of her own, with drawings, photos or other items having meaning for her. She may want you to write what she says about each page, or she may choose to do her own writing - scribbles or spellings of her own invention. Encourage her to "read" her book to other family members or friends.

## **Slow down and have fun.**

Read at a leisurely pace with pauses here and there. This gives kids time to take in what they hear, mull it over and imagine the people, places, and events. Occasionally pose a question or make a remark that will prompt the child to think, express himself or relate the story to his .

Follow the child's cues. Sometimes children are caught up in the story, particularly the first time through, and don't want stops and detours along the way. At other times, they're ready to chat about the story or pictures and speculate about what-if or what-next questions.

Now and then try skipping an expected phrase to see if the child supplies it, for instance, when you say, "But the baby bear's chair was \_\_\_\_\_," the child may sing out, "Just right!" Books with such repetition and predictable patterns are great for preschoolers and early readers.

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\* A Child Care Aware® Quality Assured Consumer Education and Referral Service



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**6. Read it again...and again.**

Suggest they tape themselves reading children's stories.

**7. Foster your child's awareness of print and how we use it.**

Print your child's name on her lunch box and other belongings while she watches.

Explain that the label will help everyone know that the item is hers. Talk about everyday print. ("Let's go here. The sign says Pizza Parlor.") Point out letters and words and encourage your child to find them in books and all around (or games, packages and many other places). Challenge your child to be a print detective ("Can you tell what cereal I've written on the list?")

**8. Provide a variety of writing tools and materials.**

Stock a writing area with scrap paper, used greeting cards, back forms, mail-order forms, envelopes and little notebooks. Provide different kinds of markers, crayons, pencils, and other writing tools. Allow children to use a computer or typewriter to write. For some children the handwriting process itself is so laborious that they don't write unless they have to.

**9. Don't push or pressure children about what or when to read.**

Don't nag your child to read. You'll defeat your purpose. If you're doing lots of other things on this list, your child will get interested in reading. Take turns picking the bedtime books that are very popular with children of your child's age and interests.

**10. Show children that you value their efforts.**

Display your child's writing prominently and show how much you enjoy and value it. Ask your child to read to you, a younger sibling or a special visitor. If a child makes a mistake when reading aloud, don't interrupt. If the mistake doesn't change the meaning, let it go. Make sure you read some of the books your children enjoy, even when they read very well themselves, so you can share your reactions and pleasure together. Respond positively to the message in your children's writing rather than focus on handwriting or spelling. Talk with children about the reading and writing they are doing at school.

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