

BUILDING READERS®

How Families Can Help Children Get Ready to Read

Homer Brink Elementary

Put your child in charge of story time

Build your preschooler's sense of responsibility by letting her take charge when it comes to story time. To help her feel more responsible, let your child:

- **Choose what to read.** Show her several books she might enjoy. Then, let her choose the ones to read together.
- **Pick the time.** Would your child prefer to read after lunch or before bed?
- **Select a snack.** What would make sharing stories even better? How about apple slices and a cup of milk? Or a few cubes of cheese and some water?
- **Help clean up.** Show your child that being responsible includes treating books with respect. After story time, ask her to help collect her books and put them back on the bookshelf.



"Any book that helps a child to form a habit of reading, to make reading one of his deep and continuing needs, is good for him."

—Maya Angelou

Your child's name is a fun learning tool

There's nothing more special to your child than his very own name. And you can use his name to help build his interest in letters and words.

Here are a few ideas:

- **Print the letters of your child's name** on a piece of paper. Say each letter as you write it. When you finish, read his name. Let him trace the letters with his finger.
- **Have your child draw a picture.** When he's done, say, "Let's put your name on your picture." Again, say each letter as you write it.
- **Print your child's name on a card.** Have him decorate the card. Then hang it on the door to his room.

Jump start your child's brainpower

When you read with your child, you're strengthening his cognitive (thinking) skills. Reading:

- **Encourages your child** to explore new ideas. If you just finished *Cinderella*, ask what would happen if slippers really were made of glass.
- **Gives him perspective** about his own life. Help him think about how his life relates to the characters' lives.



Get moving when you read!

Don't sit still when you read to your child. Point to the pictures that show what you are reading about. Mimic the action that is taking place. If the story mentions someone's toes, tickle your child's toes. Have your child move with you as you read together. It's a great way to develop her motor skills.



Reading promotes word smarts

Reading aloud doesn't just build your child's vocabulary. It also teaches him that words can have more than one meaning.

For instance, you may read "The puppy likes to *bark*" on one page, and then come across a bird "pecking at the tree's *bark*" several pages later.

Point out that your child now knows two different meanings for the same word!



Building your preschooler's vocabulary is as easy as A-B-C

You know that it's important to help your child build her vocabulary—but how else can you do this in addition to reading to your child? Try this clever twist on reciting the alphabet. Here's how to play:

- 1. Take turns with your child** going through the alphabet. You start with the letter A, your child continues with the letter B, and so on.
- 2. Name a word that begins with your letter** on your turn. Have your child do the same. For an extra challenge, try to stick to a theme. For example, you might name things that your child would be able to find in your home.
- 3. Go through the alphabet** again when you finish. But avoid repeating words you used in the first round.



Bring children's books to life!

Reading doesn't have to end when you close the book. Let it inspire more activities. For example, after reading:

- ***If You Give a Mouse a Cookie***, bake cookies with your child.
- ***Green Eggs and Ham***, get green food coloring and start scrambling!
- ***Chicka Chicka Boom Boom***, draw a coconut tree. Cut the letters of your child's name out of paper and have her march them up the tree.



Boost your child's reading readiness skills

Learning to read involves more than just learning letters and sounds. Your child develops reading skills when he:

- **Recognizes patterns.** Use colored blocks to make a pattern, such as red block, blue block, red block. Ask your child to copy it.
- **Recalls information.** Put four items on a tray. Let your child look for one minute, then take the tray away. How many of the items can he remember?
- **Notices differences.** Draw three people. Make them all the same—but put a hat on one. See if your child can find what's different. Then, move on to a more subtle difference.



Books to delight your early reader

- ***Chalk*** by Bill Thomson (Marshall Cavendish Children's Books). When three children find a bag of magical chalk, they start to draw intricate pictures—that suddenly come to life!
- ***The Butterfly Alphabet*** by Kjell B. Sandved (Scholastic). Swoop and soar with colorful butterflies. See their natural letter markings and read about the amazing things butterflies can do.
- ***The Littlest Dinosaur*** by Michael Foreman (Walker & Company). A tiny dinosaur is born into a family where his size isn't appreciated. That is, until the tiny dinosaur's family is stuck in the mud and they need his help to get out.



Q: My child falls asleep within a few minutes after I crack open her first bedtime story. Should I skip nighttime reading altogether?

A: Not at all. Sharing stories is a wonderful ritual to have any time of the day, so keep it up—you're building happy memories with books! If bedtime isn't the best time to read for at least 15 minutes, read together during the day, too, when she's more alert.

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