



Early Literacy: THE FOUNDATION FOR LEARNING AND LIFE

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Research has shown for decades that being read to and having interactive experiences with books are key predictors of a child's later school success. Many parents wonder at what point they should start reading with their children. Interestingly, a love of reading begins early on as infants, or some say, even before birth. When you begin to read books to your little ones, point to the pictures in the book and talk about them in an exaggerated fashion. What you say doesn't necessarily have to match the words in the book—you can personalize the story to make it even more engaging.

Making the time to read together is a must if you are on a mission to raise an active reader. Robert Needlman, M.D., author of *Dr. Spock's Baby Basics* and member of the Primrose Schools Education Advisory Board, suggests that one of the most important things about nurturing a reader is to read with a child from a very early age. "There's no prescription for this, the only prescription is to allow some time each day that you can sit down, connect with your child, and read together. The main thing is to allow it to occur in a way that's joyful, that conveys enjoyment to the child—from enjoyment the rest will follow."

Selecting the right books is a key factor in helping make the time you and your child spend reading a very special time. Books that really work

TRY THESE TIPS TO HELP YOUR FAMILY CREATE A FUN AND ENGAGING LITERACY-RICH ENVIRONMENT THAT WILL HELP BUILD AN EARLY FOUNDATION FOR A SUCCESSFUL READER:

- SURROUND CHILDREN WITH AGE-APPROPRIATE BOOKS ON A VARIETY OF SUBJECTS.
- READ STORIES TO CHILDREN DAILY FROM INFANCY AND ENCOURAGE THEM TO PARTICIPATE IN THE STORY.
- ALWAYS KEEP FAVORITE BOOKS IN THE CAR FOR "WAITING" PERIODS AND LONG TRIPS.
- ASK YOUR CHILD'S TEACHER FOR A LIST OF BOOKS THAT RELATE TO WHAT IS HAPPENING AT SCHOOL. BUY OR BORROW THESE BOOKS FROM THE LIBRARY AND READ THEM TOGETHER AT HOME.
- OLDER CHILDREN, PRESCHOOL AND ABOVE WHO HAVE BEEN READ TO WILL PROUDLY "READ" THEIR FAVORITE FAMILIAR BOOKS ALOUD. THEY WILL USUALLY RETELL THE STORY AS THEY TURN THE PAGES AND POINT TO THE ILLUSTRATIONS. SOMETIMES CHILDREN WILL MAKE UP ENTIRELY DIFFERENT STORIES TO GO WITH THE PICTURES. THIS IS A SIGNIFICANT STAGE IN LITERACY DEVELOPMENT BECAUSE CHILDREN ARE DEMONSTRATING THAT THEY KNOW BOOKS ARE MEANT TO COMMUNICATE STORIES. THEY ARE "GETTING" IT.

have engaging, distinct illustrations and simple, rhythmic language. Children particularly enjoy books that are repetitive or ask them to participate and anticipate what comes next. Another important factor to remember when choosing books for your child is to select ones that you like yourself, because you'll probably read them in a more animated, connected manner. Children love to hear the same book read over and over again, which is another good reason to make sure the books you choose are ones you won't easily get tired of. You will naturally foster an appreciation of literature when your child sees that you also take pleasure from a book.

Children come into the world on a mission to learn how language works, and parents talk and sing with them to support their understanding and their ability to communicate. Reading books with them is another powerful language support tool that enables children to put together an idea of how stories and written language work. Cognitive development needs a surrounding supportive relationship to flourish, so go grab a book and begin reading to your child today! 📖



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