

A Guide to Reading With Your Child

Brought to you by the Editors of *Building Readers*

WHY is reading so important?

Why is oxygen important? Or sunlight? Easy—because they're the basics in life, the foundation upon which everything else rests.

Reading is a basic, too. Without solid reading skills, your child may struggle in school. If she's a good reader, there's no limit to what she can achieve.

But what does this mean for parents of preschoolers? Well, it means that you should start right now, today, paving the way for your child's success in reading. And it doesn't matter if she's only a preschooler and barely knows her ABCs.

By surrounding your child with letters, words and books, you'll enrich her in ways you may never have imagined. Here's a guide to getting started:

WHO should read?

Everyone, of course! Here are the important players when it comes to getting your preschooler to read:

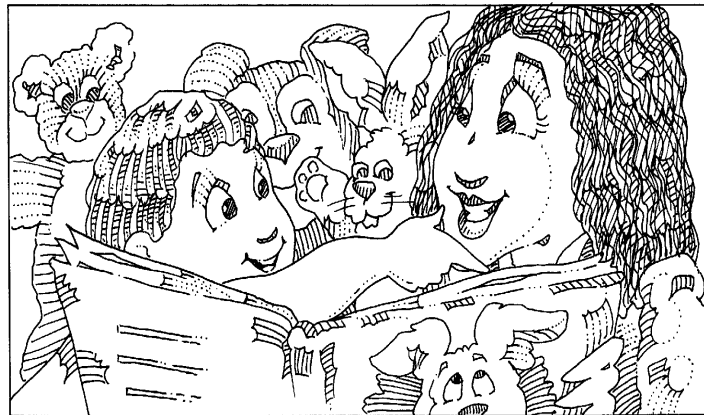
- **Mom and Dad.** Parents have the single greatest impact on whether or not their children learn to read for pleasure. So instead of always reaching for the remote control, pick up a book instead. Your little one will notice, and he'll follow your lead.
- **Teachers and caregivers.** If your child attends daycare or preschool, speak with her teacher about making book time a part of daily activities. Send a favorite book along with her each day. Volunteer to come in once in awhile to read to the class yourself.

- **Your child.** He'll only learn to love words, letters and books if he's given a chance to explore them, so don't over-schedule his day. Quiet time at home was made for looking at books.

WHAT is reading with your child?

Well, a lot of it is just how it sounds—curling up together with a good book. But teaching her to love and appreciate reading is much more than that. There are countless other ways to nudge your child toward reading readiness. Here are a few:

- **Talk to her often.** When you speak with your child, you're giving him a chance to learn new words and to hear how sentences go together.
- **Give your child a chance to tell you about her day.** Doing so lets her practice storytelling, vocabulary and word pronunciation—all of which are vital to good reading.
- **Broaden his world.** Teach him colors, help him name shapes and explain the difference between sunlight, rain, snow and wind. Also, take him to exciting places like the zoo and the park. Every bit of information he picks up as a preschooler will become priceless background knowledge when he begins reading.
- **Let your child write.** Reading and writing go together, so spend time every day helping your child hold a pencil and form letters. Be sure to applaud his efforts.



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- **When you do read** together, choose quality books. Younger children especially love simple stories, rhymes and bold pictures.

WHEN should you read with your child?

There's no bad time to read with your child, or to encourage her to read. But some times of the day may be better than others.

That old standby, bedtime, works well for many families. But if it's not for you, try squeezing 20-30 minutes of book time into these moments:

- **During your child's bath.** While he's happily splashing in the tub, sit along the edge and read books aloud.
- **When the TV is off.** As the parent, it's your job to limit the amount of time your child watches the tube, uses the computer and plays video games. If the house is unplugged, she's more likely to reach for a book.
- **While you're making dinner.** Sure, your hands are full, but your child's aren't. Have him tell you a story while you're cooking. Or have him grab his favorite book and "read" it to you.
- **In the car.** No, you can't read while you're driving, but you can sing the alphabet song together or play rhyming games.
Every second your child spends exposed to words and letters is another step toward literacy.
- **Not when she's fussy.** If your child is overtired or cranky, don't force a book on her.

WHERE should you read with your child?

EVERYWHERE! Keep his world filled with books, and he's likely to start leafing through them.

Aside from the importance of a well-stocked bookshelf, here are some other ideas for where to read with your little one:

- **At the library.** The library is an incredible resource for both you and your child, so try to visit it often.
Besides just checking out books, see if there are any special programs geared toward preschoolers (such as group story times or "reading" clubs for pre-readers). Get her involved.

- **In a special area** at home. Create a small space in your house devoted to all things literary.

Fill it with books, children's magazines, old newspapers, writing tablets, pencils, markers and crayons. Let your child spend lots of time there. Don't worry if the space is really small—even a card table will work!

- **Everywhere else.** New locations, surroundings or situations, as well as your help, guidance and constant encouragement, will help get your child get ready to read.

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