

Making Reading Fun: Activities to Promote Reading

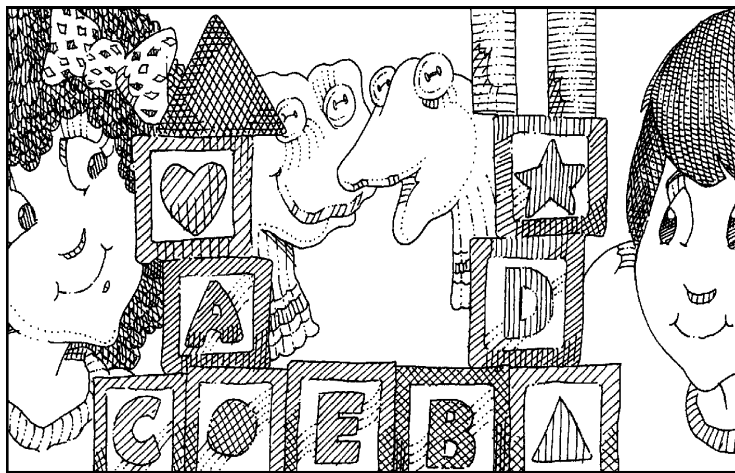
Brought to you by the Editors of *Building Readers*

Of course reading is fundamental, but it should also be plain fun. If you'd like your preschooler to love all things literary (even if he's not yet a reader), try a few of these tips for making letters, words and books a year-round pleasure:

- **Teach your child** to sing her name! Pick a tune she knows well (such as "Happy Birthday" or "Bingo"). Substitute the letters in her name for the actual lyrics.

Pretty soon, your little B-E-T-T-Y or S-U-S-A-N will be happily chirping her own name.

- **Label a pair** of your child's play shoes "Left" and "Right." Each time he glances down, he'll be learning to recognize two words—not to mention a couple of very important directions.
- **Have a theme dinner!** Take your child's favorite book character (such as Curious George or Maisy) and serve a dish the character would eat. For example, monkeys might enjoy a banana split for dessert, and little mice sure love cheese!
- **Once a week**, have a "backward bedtime" night. Instead of reading to your child before lights out, have her "read" a favorite tale to you, telling you the story as she looks at the pictures for clues.
- **Make your own** scratchy, sandy flashcards. Take 26 index cards. Use glue to write one letter on each. Then sprinkle colored sand over the wet glue.
Once dry, shake off the excess sand and let your child enjoy his one-of-a-kind alphabet.



- **Take a field trip** to the library every week and try to explore a different type of book each time (such as rebus books, fairy tales, books of photography and poetry collections).
- **Make one corner** of your home a "reading and writing" area. Fill it with magazines, newspapers, board books, crayons, paper and markers. Encourage your child to spend lots of time there.

- **Play dress-up.** Flip through one of your child's favorite books for some interesting characters. See if you can recreate their getups at home!
- **Getting bored** with reading the same stories to your child? Substitute her name for the hero's. Suddenly an old tale feels brand new again.

- **Go on a nature walk** around the neighborhood or at the park, and make a book about your journey. Even if she can't write, your child can still paste leaves onto pages or draw pictures of your adventure.
- **Play rhyming games** to pass the time. If you're stuck at the grocery store checkout or in traffic, ask your little one to rhyme simple words like "bat" or "run." Each time you play, he'll be boosting his vocabulary.
- **Decorate your refrigerator** with rainbow-colored letter magnets. Put them at your preschooler's eye level. When she comes for a snack, she'll see the alphabet and end up nourishing her mind along with her body.

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- **Don't rent the movie** until AFTER you and your child have read the book together!
- **Even if your little one** is too old for nap time, he's not too old for quiet book time. So make time each and every day where the focus is off the TV and on the bookshelf.
- **Have an ABC meal.** Let your child draw three letters out of a bowl (skip X and Z), and serve foods that begin with those letters. Be flexible! In a pinch, "Q" can stand for *Quite* good pizza or *Quivery* gelatin.
- **Use strips of poster board** to label a few things in your child's room. After awhile, she'll recognize that "Bed" is the word for what she sleeps on, and "Dresser" holds her clothes.
- **Create new stories** by mixing together old ones. Pick a handful of standbys, such as *Cinderella*, the *Cat in the Hat* and *Corduroy*. Help your child spin a wild tale combining characters from all three.
- **Get dramatic!** Instead of reading your child a story, try acting it out. Pick a simple tale with only two or three characters. Then take turns playing the roles with him.
- **Give a story** a new ending. Instead of reading straight through to the last page, stop halfway and ask your child to think of a different (though still happy) outcome.
- **Surf the Internet** along with your child. For all that's bad out there on the Web, there's also plenty of good. Spend a few minutes each day searching for kid-friendly, reading-friendly sites. If you're not sure where to begin, www.nickjr.com (8/00) and www.pbs.org (8/00) are both safe bets.
- **Take advantage** of the library! Besides just checking out books, get your child involved in weekly story times and other children's programs. Lots of libraries offer book clubs (even for pre-readers) that encourage kids to read by offering them incentives such as stickers and certificates.
- **Let your child** "read" the recipe while you bake. Point out words like "flour" and "sugar," then ask her what else she thinks should go in the dough. Her responses are sure to be charming, even if they're not edible!
- **See how many** popular restaurant and business signs your child can recognize. Eventually, he'll learn to put the names with the logos, and will soon be "reading" them out loud to you. Once he gets really good, expose him to new signs by taking a different route home.
- **Pick a letter** and see if your child can name five words that begin with it (skip Q, X and Z). For pre-readers, this is a concrete way to teach that each letter makes a unique sound, and that words start in all sorts of different ways.
- **Build letter sculptures** in the sand or snow. Simple shapes like O, D, L and C are both fun to create and a great way to teach your child hands-on letter recognition.
- **Write a letter** on a piece of paper. Let your child use clay to mold the same letter. Try this with numbers, too.
- **Look through the newspaper** with your child. Together, find familiar letters and numbers in headlines.
- **Record yourself reading** your child's favorite book. Give cues when you turn pages. When you can't read the story to your child, she can play the tape and turn the pages herself.
- **Take your child** on a grocery store scavenger hunt. Make a list of things he'll be able to find. For example, something with the letter "a" on it.
- **Write a letter of the alphabet** on a sheet of paper. Have your child think of things that begin with that letter. Suggest that she draw these items.
- **Print your child's name** on paper. Have him glue decorations to it, such as buttons, glitter and popcorn. Or have him trace each letter with several crayon colors, making "letter rainbows."
- **Help your child** make a "name bracelet." Together, find the letters of her name in dry alphabet pasta. String the letters onto a piece of yarn and tie it around her wrist.
- **Give your child several things** to look for in a magazine, book or the newspaper—letters, animals, people smiling.
- **Suggest that your child** make shapes or letters with his body. For example, a circle or the letter "t." How many can he make?
- **Pause while reading** your child a familiar story. Have her fill in the blanks.
- **Ask your child to whom** he would like to write a letter. Let him dictate the letter while you write it down. Suggest that he include a drawing.