

# BUILDING READERS®

How Families Can Help Children Get Ready to Read

Rochester Community Schools

## Building vocabulary is as easy as A-B-C!

You know that it's important to help your child build his vocabulary—but what are some creative ways that you can do this in addition to reading to your child? Use this clever twist on reciting the alphabet. Here's how to play:

- 1. Take turns with your child** going through the alphabet (you take "A," he gets "B," etc.).
- 2. For each letter,** name a word that begins with that letter (*apple, bat, car* and so on). For an extra challenge, try to stick to a theme (for example, you may name things that you would be able to find at home).
- 3. Go through the alphabet** again when you finish. But avoid repeating any words from the last round!



*"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 great learning tool

There's nothing more special to your child than her very own name. And you can use her name to help build her interest in letters and words. In fact, her first, middle and last names are great sight vocabulary word for her to learn—words that she recognizes right away when she sees them.

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 her name.
- **Have your child draw a picture.** When she'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 her decorate the card. Then hang it on the door to her room.

**Source:** "What's in a Name? — Learn to Read," <http://homeschooling.about.com/library/blreadact9.htm>.

## Jump start your child's brainpower

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

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



**Source:** S.A. Perry, Ph.D., *The Complete Help Your Child Learn to Read Book*, Parent-Assisted Learning Services.

## Bring story time to life!

Reading doesn't have to end when you close the book. Let it inspire more activities! After reading *If You Give a Mouse a Cookie*, bake cookies with your child. When you finish *Green Eggs and Ham*, get green food coloring and start scrambling!



**Source:** D.P. Dougherty, "Ready, Set, Read!! How to Read to a Young Child," Pre-K Smarties, [www.preksmarties.com/reading/reading11.htm](http://www.preksmarties.com/reading/reading11.htm).

## Bag up a love of reading

Get your little one excited about visiting the library regularly by making a special "library bag."

Get an inexpensive tote bag from a craft store (or find an old one around the house), and help your child decorate it with fabric paint or markers.



She'll want to go to the library often so she can fill it up—and it can turn her into a lifelong reader!

## Put your child in charge of story time

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

- **Choose what to read.** Make a trip to the library together. Ask the librarian to show him several books he might enjoy. Then let him choose a few to take home.
- **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 water? Or a few cubes of cheese and some juice?
- **Help clean up.** Show your child that being responsible includes treating books with respect. After story time, he might help collect his books and put them on the shelf.



## Use family tales as inspiration for storytelling

Stumped about which kinds of stories to tell your child? Start in the most familiar place of all: your own family! Kids adore hearing tales about people they know—and especially about themselves.

To become a star storyteller in your home:

- **Be confident.** Who cares if you're not a pro? Certainly not your child. Just be enthusiastic and engaged.
- **Think back.** What silly things have happened in your family's past? What do you remember from when you were a child? Use old photo albums for inspiration.
- **Make your child the star.** Young kids love recalling the crazy things they've done,



so turn your child's happy exploits into a story.

Source: D. Butler, *Babies Need Books*, Heinemann.



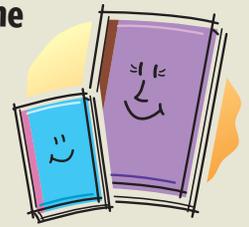
**Q:** Other children in my child's preschool class know how to read, but my four-year-old doesn't. What's wrong?

**A:** Probably nothing at all! Each child learns to read at her own pace, so don't compare your child to others. Doing so may turn something fun—like sharing stories—into something stressful. Just keep reading to your child. Surround her with words. Teach her to love books and you'll build a lifelong reader.

Do you have a question about reading? Email [readingadvisor@parent-institute.com](mailto:readingadvisor@parent-institute.com).

## Make family reading part of your routine

Reading can—and should—be a family affair! If you think reading is important, your child will, too. To get the whole family to enjoy books together:



- **Think beyond bedtime.** Why limit yourself to lights out? Carve out other times to explore books as a family.
- **Make it cozy.** Toss a blanket on the floor and snuggle up to read together.
- **Let your child read on is own.** Let your child "read" his books as you read on your own.

## Books to delight your early reader

- ***I'm a Shark!*** by Bob Shea (Balzer+Bray). Shark isn't afraid of bears, the dark—or anything! Well, there may be one thing that scares Shark ...
- ***Elephants Cannot Dance*** by Mo Willems (Hyperion). Piggie is teaching all of her friends to dance. But Gerald the elephant is having some trouble picking up the new moves.
- ***The Butterfly Alphabet*** by Kjell B. Sandvend (Scholastic). Swoop and soar with colorful butterflies! Each page contains a beautiful picture and a description of the amazing things butterflies can do.



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