

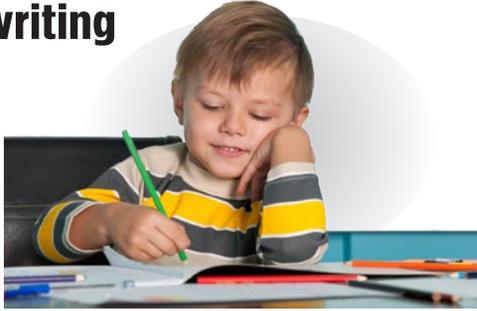
BUILDING READERS®

How Families Can Help Children Get Ready to Read

Rochester Community Schools

Try these fun ways to teach your child about writing

Sitting down with a pencil and paper and showing your child how to make letters isn't the only way to teach your child about writing. Here are some other ways to build early writing skills:



- **Read to your child.** Follow the text with your finger to show that print goes from left to right and that there are spaces between words.
- **Have your child dictate stories.** Write down the tales your child tells. You'll get him thinking creatively, and he'll want to read what he wrote.
- **Play with magnetic letters.** Put some letter magnets on your refrigerator. While you prepare meals, have your child sound out different letters.
- **Make a letter scrapbook.** Write a letter on each page of a scrapbook. Then have your child add pictures of things that start with each letter.

*"Many people, myself among them,
feel better at the mere sight of a book."*

—Jane Smiley

Teach new words through conversations

Build your child's vocabulary naturally by working new words into your regular reading and conversations.

When teaching your child a new word, try to:

- **Define new words** using words that your child already knows. Give examples that your child can relate to. "An *assistant* is someone who is a helper. You're a great *assistant* when I'm making dinner!"
- **Have your child think of examples** that fit the word. "Can you think of people who have an *assistant*?"
- **Use the word as often as you can.** Look for ways to use it in your child's everyday life. You can find examples in books, movies or on your errands in your neighborhood.

Source: "Talk It Up! Expanding a Child's Vocabulary," ReadWriteThink, <http://tinyurl.com/a5omt4d>.

Practice letter sounds with your child to prepare for reading

Learning sounds is an important part of getting ready to read. Here are some ways you can help your child practice:

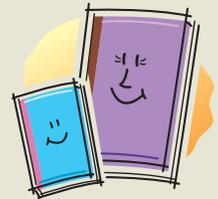
- **Read books** with words that rhyme.
- **Teach songs** and short poems.
- **Help separate the sounds** in words and listen for beginning and ending sounds.



Source: "Put Reading First—Helping Your Child Learn to Read," National Reading Panel, <http://tinyurl.com/mwo5nnj>.

Encourage your child to be active during story time!

Does your child have trouble sitting still at story time? That's okay—use his energy to your advantage. Have him act out the story as you read it!



Language skills lead to reading skills



Look for ways to expose your preschooler to words—both written and spoken. You'll be helping her build the language skills she'll need to be a good reader.

You can:

- **Invent silly words** and stories together.
- **Encourage your child to speak** in complete sentences.
- **Look at books together.** Read familiar stories and new ones, too.
- **Ask your child** about the new things she is learning.

Source: "Helping Children Build Language Skills," Scholastic, www.scholastic.com/parents/resources/article/speaking-language-skills/helping-children-build-language-skills.

Build your child's language skills using music

Music is a fun, free and terrific teaching tool. And you don't need to be a world-class musician in order to shower your child with its benefits. Here are several areas where music can boost your child's language learning:

- **Vocabulary.** From "Mary Had a Little Lamb" to "Three Blind Mice," songs introduce children to new words.
- **Communication.** Music promotes both emotional well-being and self-expression.
- **Creativity.** Music provides an outlet for your child's imaginative side. Choose a favorite tune and invent new lyrics for it together.
- **Literacy.** Research shows that music can improve children's early literacy skills.



Source: "Singing as a Teaching Tool," National Association for the Education of Young Children, education.com, www.education.com/reference/article/Ref_Singing_as_Teaching/.

Develop your child's memory skills

One very important part of reading is remembering what you've read, something that is difficult for many children. But memory skills can be developed—especially before age six.

Helping your child strengthen her visual memory increases her ability to think, concentrate and be creative.

Here's a fun memory game to try:

1. **Select a detailed picture** from one of your child's picture books.
2. **Briefly show her the picture.**
3. **Ask simple questions** to see what she remembers. "What color was the cat?" "How many people did you see?"



As her memory improves, try decreasing the amount of time your child looks at a picture.

Source: L. Hausner, *Teaching Your Child Concentration*, Lifeline Press.



Q: By bedtime, my three year-old is way too sleepy for stories. How can we squeeze more book time into the day?

A: Regular reading is critical. If bedtime's not the best time, try to read after meals, before naps or anytime you're both relaxed. You can also read when you and your child are waiting in line at the post office or bank.

Do you have a question about reading? Email readingadvisor@parent-institute.com.

Sight words build a foundation for reading

When children are first learning to read, knowing some *sight words*—words they can recognize by looking at them—forms a strong foundation. Sight words for pre-readers include words that are important to your child, like:



- **Her name.**
- **The names of important people.** (Mom, Dad.)
- **Words she sees** on signs. (Stop.)

Source: "Beginning Preschool Sight Words," Ideal Curriculum, <http://tinyurl.com/7dzagdd>.

Books to delight your early reader

- ***Cold Little Duck, Duck, Duck*** by Lisa Westberg Peters (Greenwillow). A little duck returns to the pond too early—the water is frozen, and she's cold! But slowly, it starts to warm up, and spring is on its way.
- ***I Can Be Anything*** by Jerry Spinelli (Little, Brown and Company). There are so many things that one little boy wants to be when he grows up, from a silly joke teller to a pumpkin grower. This fun book will show your child that he can be anything when he grows up!
- ***The Pigeon Wants a Puppy*** by Mo Willems (Disney-Hyperion). All Pigeon wants is a puppy—he'll take really good care of it! But when he finally gets a puppy, it's a little more work than he expected.



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