

# Building Readers<sup>®</sup>

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How Families Can Help Children Get Ready to Read

## Build listening, speaking skills to boost reading

Research shows that youngsters who have many opportunities to listen to and speak with others gain vital language skills. These skills are crucial parts of learning to read and write.

To help your preschooler develop her listening and speaking skills:

- **Have conversations with her.** Ask questions that require her to think: "Why did you paint the bird green?"
- **Have her make predictions** about what might happen next in a story you're reading together, based on what she's heard so far.
- **Play listening games.** Have her close her eyes, then see if she can identify various sounds (e.g., a lawn mower, wind chimes, etc.).

**Source:** "Teaching Our Youngest: Developing Listening and Speaking Skills," U.S. Department of Education, [www.ed.gov/teachers/how/early/teachingouryoungest/page\\_pg6.html](http://www.ed.gov/teachers/how/early/teachingouryoungest/page_pg6.html).



**Tip**

Did you know that reading to your youngster is the most essential thing you can do to boost his literacy skills? Better yet, it fuels his imagination—and is a fabulous way for you to bond!

**Source:** "WIC Topics A-Z: Reading Readiness," WIC Works Resource System, [www.nal.usda.gov/wicworks/Topics/Reading\\_Readiness.html](http://www.nal.usda.gov/wicworks/Topics/Reading_Readiness.html).

**Q:** My son only pays attention for short periods. Should I force him to sit still through a long story time?



**A:** No. Sharing stories should be fun. Forcing your child to sit when he'd rather play may cause him to dread reading altogether. Instead, follow his lead. When he's ready to put down the books, put them down.

**Questions & Answers**

## Classical music month

To celebrate September's Classical Music Month, play some Bach or Beethoven while reading with your child. Some research suggests that listening to classical music boosts brain power like memory and awareness.



## Reinvent reading routines

In honor of the new school year, start some new reading routines with your child. Here are two:

- **Invent a story.** Clip pictures from magazines or collect several family photos. Use them to illustrate your child's made-up tale.
- **Re-invent a story.** Grab a favorite picture book, but don't read the text. Instead, create a new tale to go along with the illustrations.

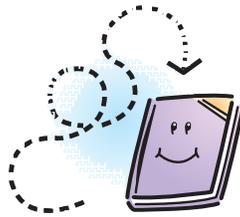


## Resource for families

The goal of the International Children's Digital Library is "to create a collection of more than 10,000 books in at least 100 languages that is freely available to children, teachers, librarians, parents ... via the Internet." Visit [www.icdlbooks.org](http://www.icdlbooks.org) to explore this ambitious work-in-progress.

## Do your bookshelves need updating?

Is it time to update your preschooler's bookshelf? Take this quiz to find out. Answer *True* or *False* to the following.



The books on my child's shelf:

1. **Don't interest her** like they used to.
2. **Are worn out** or have lost pages.
3. **Don't offer much** variety.
4. **Are geared more** toward babies and toddlers than preschoolers.
5. **Are starting to** bore me, too.

### How did you do?

If you answered mostly *True*, it's time to add some engaging, age-appropriate titles to your child's collection. (Hold a "book swap" with other parents.) Mostly *False*? Your child's bookshelf sounds just right!

## Find books your four-year-old will love

If you're stumped when it comes to finding engaging books for your four-year-old, keep these points in mind:

- **Children this age** have wonderful senses of humor and love jokes.

- **They enjoy hearing** (and telling) far-fetched tales.
- **They adore riddles**, non-sense rhymes and made-up words.

Still can't find any titles? Ask your child's teacher or the public librarian for suggestions.

**Source:** "Reading to Preschoolers," University of Tennessee Institute of Agriculture, <http://fcs.tennessee.edu/lifesmarts/Reading%20To%20Preschoolers.pdf>.

## Tunes that teach

If you sing lullabies or hum melodies to your preschooler, pat yourself on the back. You're boosting his language skills! Here's how:



- **Songs build vocabulary.** Every new word you sing to your child is an automatic vocabulary-booster. To introduce new words, invent lyrics to go along with familiar tunes. Songs are also terrific for introducing him to the concept of rhyming.
- **Music nurtures creativity.** Not only is music a pleasure to listen to, it also strengthens young minds. From stoking his imagination to building his communication skills, music is a fun, free way to enhance your child's language learning.

**Source:** "Singing as a Teaching Tool," National Association for the Education of Young Children, [www.naeyc.org/ece/2004/01.asp](http://www.naeyc.org/ece/2004/01.asp).



**Dora Goes for a Ride**, by Phoebe Beinstein. Dora is off to visit her cousin Diego. And

with planes, cars, balloons and rowboats all around, getting there is half the fun!

**Duck on a Bike**, by David Shannon. The barnyard animals think duck is crazy! Why would anyone want to ride a bike? On the other hand, it does look like fun ...

## Make a sandy alphabet

Looking for a simple, scratchy way to teach your child his ABCs? Make a set of sand letters. Here's how:



- **Gather 26 index cards**, a bottle of glue and some sand.
- **Use the glue** to draw one letter on each card. While the glue is still wet, sprinkle the letters with sand.
- **Lay the cards flat** to dry.
- **Shake off** any excess sand.

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### Building Readers®

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