

Building Readers[®]

Denise Bereznoff, Principal
Baldwin Elementary School

How Families Can Help Children Get Ready to Read

Does your child have a learning delay? Don't delay!

Do you suspect that your child has a learning delay? Have him tested now, because early intervention is important. Research shows that kids with reading-related learning disabilities can thrive if they get help by age four or five. Here are some possible signs of learning disabilities:

- **Late talking.**
- **Trouble pronouncing** sounds or words.
- **Difficulty communicating** with others.

If your child has any of these symptoms, talk to his pediatrician. You may be referred to a speech language pathologist for testing. But whatever you do, don't put it off. Kids with learning disabilities can go on to thrive in school!

Source: "When Pre-Schoolers Are Not 'On Target' in Their Development," Learning Disabilities Association of America, 412/341-1515, www.idanat1.org/about/parents/early_childhood/guide.asp.

Tip Struggling to keep your child interested in your made-up tales? Tell her stories about yourself when you were a kid. Better yet, tell her about herself when she was "little." Preschoolers adore yarns like these!

Source: Evelyn Petersen, "Teaching Children an Appreciation of Reading," The National Parenting Center, www.tnpc.com/parentalk/preschoolers/presch35.html.

Q: Along with toys, I'd like to give my preschooler books for the holidays. How can I find titles she'll like?

A: What are her interests? If she loves acrobats, she'll likely love circus books. Does she adore ballerinas? Find kid-friendly books on ballet. Beyond that, look for age-appropriate titles with splashy illustrations. Rhymes and riddles are always fun, too.

Questions & Answers



Make up real-life rhymes

Here's a quick way to teach your youngster about rhymes:

- **Show her three objects** whose names rhyme (e.g., a block, a sock and a rock).
- **Have her name** the objects. Ask what they have in common. Help her if she gets stuck.
- **Talk about rhymes.** Explain how changing a word's beginning sound can change its meaning altogether.

Pick a hand, any hand!

Being left- or right-handed is inborn, and most kids favor one hand by age three. If your little scribbler prefers his left hand, he may be a southpaw. To make learning to write easier for him, keep the paper close to his left side. When he's older, remind him not to drag his hand across the page—it'll smudge his words!

Source: Alison Bell, "Lefty or Righty?" Parenting.com, www.parenting.com/parenting/child/article/0,19840,1059555,00.html.

Resource for families

Don't head to the bookstore empty-handed! Instead, take along a copy of "100 Picture Books Everyone Should Know" (kids.nypl.org/reading/recommended2.cfm?ListID=61). Compiled by the New York Public Library, the free list will help you find just the right titles for your youngster.

Do you support your child as she starts learning to read?

Take this quiz to find out. Answer *True* or *False* to the following: Now that my youngster can read a tiny bit, I:

- ___ 1. **Give her** my undivided attention when she reads to me.
- ___ 2. **Don't force** her to "sound out" every word. If she's stuck, I'll help.
- ___ 3. **Don't constantly push** her to tackle harder books.
- ___ 4. **Continue reading** aloud to her.
- ___ 5. **Read out loud** with her.



How did you do?

If you answered mostly *True*, you're really supporting your little one's early reading attempts! Mostly *False*? Try using some ideas from the quiz.

Source: Marie Faust Evitt, "10 Ways to Make Reading Fun," Parents.com, www.parents.com/articles/ages_and_stages/3186.jsp.

Inspire invention

When kids invent stories, they're boosting their language learning and their creativity. Storytelling also lets them experiment with words and sharpen their communication skills. So encourage your little one to make up new tales.

Stumped about how to start? Try these ideas:

- **Create a "Memory Box."** Fill it with photos, postcards, etc. Choose one item as a jumping-off point for your child's story.
- **Play "What happens next?"** Tell your child an old folktale familiar to you but not to him. Pause partway through and ask, "What do you think happens next?" See what his creative mind comes up with!

Source: Emily Fromm, "Telling Tales," Child.com, www.child.com/kids/reading_education/tales.jsp.

Making the most of story time

Reading to your child is pretty straightforward. But there are ways to boost its benefits. To help him get the most out of story time:



- **Make it relevant to his life.** When reading animal books, chat about your recent trip to the zoo. Are you looking at books about airplanes? Talk about the flight you took last summer.
- **Have him participate.** Encourage your child to fill in the blank while you read. "The girl is on the ____." Point to the missing word and see if he can say, "scooter." Next time, see if he can answer without you pointing.

Source: Dorothy P. Dougherty, "Ready, Set, Read!! How to Read to a Young Child," Pre-K Smarties, www.preksmarties.com/reading/reading11.htm.



Pure Power, by Craig Robert Carey (Scholastic). Dump trucks dump. Loaders load.

Skycranes lift. And what do they all need to get the job done? Power, and lots of it!

Rikki-Tikki-Tavi, by Rudyard Kipling (Harcourt Brace & Company). What kind of mon-goose would fight a deadly cobra? A brave one! Find out how he does it in this classic tale complete with lovely, updated illustrations.

The word-rich web

Searching for a bilingual website filled with language-rich activities for your child? Check out First School (www.first-school.ws) and its sister site, Primera Escuela (www.primeraesuela.com). Both offer free, printable materials and tons of neat ideas for inspiring your budding bookworm!

Signs of reading development



Does your preschooler hold her books right-side up? Can she turn the pages from right to left? Is she able to retell simple stories? Congratulations! These are all signs that her reading skills are developing!

Source: "Read Together: Parents and Educators Working Together for Literacy," National Council of Teachers of English, www.ncte.org/about/over/positions/category/lit/107659.htm.

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