

Building Readers®

How Families Can Help Children Become Better Readers

Rochester Community Schools

Use storytelling to boost your child's reading skills

Storytelling is a great activity to share with your child. But, even better, it may also help turn her into a reader. That's because every time you tell your child a story, she:

- **Adds new words to her vocabulary.** Even if she doesn't understand a word right away, she is still exposed to it.
- **May be inspired to tell or write tales herself.** The more excited she gets by hearing stories, the likelier she may be to create her own.
- **Learns about story structure.** Each storytelling session helps remind her that tales have beginnings, middles and endings.
- **Develops her imagination.** Brain researchers have found that children with strong imaginations are better able to master language.



Source: Linda Fredericks, "Developing Literacy Skills Through Storytelling," The Corporation for National and Community Service, http://nationalserviceresources.org/resources/newsletters/resource_connection/volume_2_number_4/developing_literacy.php.

Conversation leads to language learning

Chatting with your preschooler is more than just a nice thing to do. It's also a chance for him to boost his language skills. That is, every conversation is an opportunity for him to learn new words, string together sentences and become a better communicator.

To help your child get the most out of conversations:

- **Get down on his level** when you speak. Make eye contact.
- **Don't rush him.** If he's struggling to find the right words, stay quiet for a moment and let him find them.
- **Be a good listener.** Show him you care about what he has to say.

Log on to learn sight words



Learning sight words—those high-frequency words readers see again and again—shouldn't be boring. It should be fun! To get your youngster interested in sight words, try this quick (and free) online game:

- **"Drag and Drop"** (www.prongo.com/drag/game.html). Take each word—such as *cat*, *sit* and *bed*—and match it to the correct picture. That's all there is to it!

Never take a vacation from reading!



Planning a getaway this spring? Don't forget to visit the nearest library, too! Click on www.publiclibraries.com and search for libraries around the place you'll be visiting. After all, what's a vacation without books?

Make a snack with shapes



Learning to recognize shapes is a building block to learning letters. Here's a fun way to help your child learn to recognize different shapes.

Cut bread into different shapes—circles, squares, triangles, etc. Be sure to make two of each shape. Ask your child to name each shape. Then, have him match the shapes that are alike. When he's done, he can put jelly on one piece and put the matching one on top to make special "shape-snacks."

Source: "Summer Home Learning Recipes for Parents and Children: Grades K-3," U.S. Department of Education, www.ed.gov/pubs/Recipes/reck-3.html.

There's no place like the library!

Make a trip to the library the highlight of your little one's week. To be sure she gets the most out of each visit:

- **Set aside enough time.** Don't rush your child through the library. Let her experience the thrill of "getting lost" in the endless shelves of books.
- **Feed her beforehand.** A hungry bookworm is a cranky bookworm, so give yours a snack before heading out the door.
- **Sign up for special events.** Let your child participate in story time or seasonal activities. If she doesn't enjoy a certain program, though, don't force her to stay with it.

Little learners grow into readers

Your preschooler shouldn't *just* be learning about letters and words. He should be learning about *everything!* Why? Because the sharper his overall learning skills, the better prepared he'll be to read.

To help boost your preschooler's brainpower every day:

- **Let him play with friends.** When he does, he'll build communication skills and learn concepts like sharing.
- **Stoke his creativity.** Ask him to invent a story, paint a picture or make something with clay.
- **Give him items to count** or measure.



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- **Encourage his passions.** Does he love bugs, stars or airplanes? Help him explore those interests.
- **Play music** for him.

Source: "Helping Your Preschool Child," U.S. Department of Education, www.ed.gov/parents/earlychild/ready/preschool/part_pg8.html#p8.



Books to delight your early reader

Whiskers & Rhymes, by Arnold Lobel (HarperTrophy). Goofy rhymes and kitty-filled drawings pack this playful book of verses. It's a wordy treat for wee poets and cat lovers alike!

Sadie and the Snowman, by Allen Morgan (Scholastic). Sadie isn't sad when her snowman starts melting. It's still winter, after all, so it'll snow again soon. But what happens when spring finally comes?

Celebrate Valentine's Day



Pick a special book to read with your child on Valentine's Day. Here are two good choices:

1. **I Like You**, by Sandol Stoddard Warburg (Houghton Mifflin). This tiny book is all about the true meaning of friendship. Read it with your child. Then, help her make a valentine for a special friend.
2. **Counting Kisses**, by Karen Katz (Scholastic). The whole family, including the dog and cat, teams up to soothe the fussy baby. This charming little board book is all about caring. It provides an opportunity to practice counting, too. It's a perfect bedtime story for Valentine's Day.



Q: My preschooler is good at rhyming words, but she slips up sometimes. Is that okay?

A: Yes. The ability to rhyme is a big part of phonemic awareness (the understanding that words are made of sounds). But that doesn't mean your child must master it in preschool. Ideally, kids should be able to rhyme short words (and identify rhymes) by the end of kindergarten.

Source: "Teaching Phonemic Awareness: Phonemic Awareness Benchmarks," Big Ideas in Beginning Reading, http://reading.uoregon.edu/pa/pa_benchmarks.php.

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

"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

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