

# Building Readers®

How Families Can Help Children Become Better Readers

Rochester Community Schools

## Make learning the alphabet fun with simple activities

Don't just drill your youngster on the ABCs! Instead, use creative ways to teach him the alphabet. Here are three:

- 1. Make cookies.** Use ABC cookie cutters to stamp out yummy treats. No alphabet cutters? Carve out simple letters with a butter knife instead. They'll still be delicious!
- 2. Play letter-focused games.** Old standbys like Scrabble® and Boggle® are great for teaching the alphabet, so play a few rounds with your child!
- 3. Go for the snow.** Give your child a squirt bottle filled with colored water. (Choose a bold color like green.) Teach him to write letters in the snow by squirting the water. Or use the snow to "build" letters together. (These ideas will also work in the sand if you live in a warmer climate.)



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## Label items around your home



Teach your child to identify words on sight by labeling items around the house. Start with common things in her room, like *bed*, *dresser* and *chair*.

As she gets better at identifying these words, move on to labeling tougher items. Who knows? She may soon surprise you by mastering tricky longer words like *refrigerator* and *microwave*.

## Download an easy-to-follow reading chart



Not sure which reading skills your child should learn? Or when? Check out the free "Reading Skills Pyramid" at Time4Learning.com ([www.time4learning.com/readingpyramid/index.htm](http://www.time4learning.com/readingpyramid/index.htm)). It'll give you a quick, at-a-glance look at just when your child's reading skills may emerge.

## Try singing to help your child learn language

Your child's language learning shouldn't just come from books—it should come from songs, too. Songs are terrific for sharpening her language skills. Even better, they're a way for the whole family to get in on the wordy fun!

To set her language learning to music:

- **Play favorite songs.** Help her invent hand motions to go with the lyrics.
- **Create a family songbook.** Make a booklet of your child's most-loved tunes and their lyrics. Refer to it whenever you're looking for something to sing.
- **Learn to sign the alphabet.** The next time you sing the alphabet song, sign the letters as you go.

**Source:** Linda K. Rath, Ed.D. and Louise Kennedy, *The Between the Lions Book for Parents*, ISBN: 0-06-051027-7 (HarperCollins, 212-207-7000, [www.harpercollins.com](http://www.harpercollins.com)).

## Get your child a library card



Here's a good way to get your preschooler excited about the library: Give him his own library card! If he has his own card, he may:

- **Be** more interested in choosing books.
- **Feel** "grown up."
- **Treat** his books with respect.

So visit your local library and see about getting your preschooler a card of his own. A wonderful, book-filled future awaits!

## Build your preschooler's brainpower

Your youngster's cognitive (or "learning") skills play a big role in his journey toward reading. So strengthen those skills every day! Here's how:

- **Talk to him.** Chatting with your child (and listening when he speaks to you) will help boost his brainpower.
- **Play together.** Go on walks and explore your neighborhood. Try a new game or invent one of your own.
- **Share stories.** Whether you read to him or he "reads" to you, spend time sharing books each day.
- **Tame the tube.** Limit your youngster's TV time to an hour or two a day. Make sure the shows he watches are both educational and appropriate.

**Source:** "What is child development and what skills do children develop at different ages," HowKidsDevelop.com, [www.howkidsdevelop.com/develop5skills.html#meetMilestone](http://www.howkidsdevelop.com/develop5skills.html#meetMilestone).

## Surround your child with new words

Research shows that some kids may know as many as 9,000 words by the time they're five years old. Help your child become one of them by expanding her vocabulary! Here's how:

- **Be descriptive.** Don't just tell your child the cake is good. Say it's *luscious*. Rather than report that it's cold outside, say it's *frigid*.
- **Encourage her to talk.** The more your little one speaks, the more opportunities she'll have to use new words.
- **Teach her nursery rhymes.** These classic poems and songs are great vocabulary builders.



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- **Expose her to new things.** Every trip to the store, visit to the mall or ride in the car is a chance for your child to experience new sights, sounds and words.

**Source:** "Building Vocabulary," APlaceofOurOwn.org, [www.aplaceofourown.org/question\\_detail.php?id=519](http://www.aplaceofourown.org/question_detail.php?id=519).



## Books to delight your early reader

**Angelina at the Fair** by Katharine Holabird (Pleasant Company). The dainty mouse does not want her younger cousin following her down the midway! But how will she feel when little Henry disappears?

**The Big Book of Animals and Bugs** by Mary Novick (Little Hare Books). It's a rich, rascally world full of creepy critters and furry friends! Lift the flaps to discover where each clever, colorful creature is hiding.

## Reading aloud *does* make a difference for your child



You probably know that reading to your child is the best way to help her build a strong foundation for reading. You may have heard that you should read to your child for at least half an hour every day. But you may not realize just how important that is.

Consider this:

- **If you read** to your child for half an hour a day, that's 900 hours by age five.
- **If you read** to your child for half an hour a week, that's 130 hours by age five.
- **If you spend fewer** than 30 minutes a week reading to your child, that's just 60 hours by age five.

**Source:** "Feed Me a Story!" America Reads, [www.ed.gov/inits/americanreads/families\\_feedme.html](http://www.ed.gov/inits/americanreads/families_feedme.html).



**Q:** I only see my child every other weekend. How can I play a role in building his reading skills?

**A:** By staying connected with his teacher. Let her know your situation, and ask for ideas about getting involved at school. Find out what your child is learning and reinforce those skills at home. Play word games together. And, as always, read!

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

**"Learning is like rowing upstream; not to advance is to drop back."**  
—Chinese proverb

**Building Readers®**  
*How Families Can Help Children Become Better Readers*  
Publisher: John H. Wherry, Ed.D.  
Managing Editor: Pat Hodgdon.  
Editor: Jennifer McGovern. Writer: Holly Smith.  
Copyright © 2008, The Parent Institute® (a division of NIS, Inc.)  
P.O. Box 7474, Fairfax Station, VA 22039-7474  
1-800-756-5525, ISSN: 1533-3299  
[www.parent-institute.com](http://www.parent-institute.com)