

Building Readers®

How Families Can Help Children Become Better Readers

Rochester Community Schools

Learning the alphabet should be a pleasure!

Teaching your youngster the ABCs? Drop those flashcards! Instead, turn learning the alphabet into a game by:

- **Getting physical.** Show your little one how to mold her body into different letters. It's a silly, stretchy way to become "letter smart."
- **Heading outdoors.** See if your child can find objects to go along with letters. "T" for tree may be easy, but what will she come up with for "S" and "R"?
- **Singing it.** Okay, this is an old standby, but it works. When teaching your child the alphabet song, though, make sure she understands that L, M, N and O are separate letters!



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Source: Debbie DeSpirt, "Teaching the Alphabet," Suite101.com, http://teachertipstraining.suite101.com/article.cfm/teaching_the_alphabet.

*"Not all readers are leaders,
but all leaders are readers."*

—Harry S. Truman

Turn songs into language-learning tools

Sure, songs are great fun, but they're an excellent language-learning tool, too! To help your little music lover get the most out of the songs he listens to:

- **Enjoy them together.** What are lyrics but stories set to music? So consider your time spent listening to songs as "musical story time." It's a wonderful way to expose your child to new tales.
- **Talk about the lyrics.** Did your child hear a new or unusual word in a song? Explain what it means!
- **Tweak the lyrics.** Boost your child's creativity by helping him invent goofy new lyrics to favorite songs.

Launch a family book club



No time to join a book club? No worries! Start a family book club with your child. Here's how:

- **Pick a time.** Designate one evening a month "book club night."
- **Get everyone involved.** Invite siblings and grandparents to join you on the big night.
- **Choose a story.** Find something exciting and unfamiliar.
- **Talk about the book.** What did everyone think?

Discover women's history



March is Women's History Month, so honor the occasion by sharing special books with your child! Log onto Reading Is Fundamental (www.rif.org/educators/books/women_booklist.msp) for a list of terrific tales about strong women.

Enjoy visits to the library



A trip to the library should be thrilling for your child—every time. What it should not be is:

- **A reward.** Don't look at visits to the library as something your child "earns" when he's good—make them a regular part of his week!
- **A special occasion.** Of course a trip to the library is special, but don't make it a once-in-awhile event. Instead, go often!
- **A chore.** Encourage your child to look forward to library trips—and be excited about them as well.

Play your child's way to a better vocabulary

Your child's vocabulary—the words she knows—is an important part of her reading-readiness skills. Along with surrounding her with words, build her vocabulary by playing:

- **The Rhyming Game.** Give your child a simple definition, and have her come up with the two-word, rhyming answer. For example: "What do you call a too-heavy kitty?" The answer? "A fat cat."
- **The Alphabet Game.** Starting with "A," take turns naming a word that begins with each letter of the alphabet. If the first round is too easy—"and, boy, cat," etc.—try finding longer words ("acorn, banana, cookie") for round two.

Source: "Building Vocabulary Words-Games & Activities," Time4Learning.com, www.time4learning.com/readingpyramid/vocabulary.htm.

Make reading time special

Sharing books with your child is the most important thing you can do to help prepare him to read on his own. To make sure the time you spend reading with your child is special:

- **Find a comfortable place** to sit when you read. Turn off the TV or radio.
- **Hold the book** so your child can see the words and pictures.
- **Point to the pictures.** Ask your child to tell you what he sees.
- **Let your child** pick the books you will read, even if he asks for the same book over and over again.



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- **Read with expression.** Vary the pace of your reading, too.
- **Look for other books** by your child's favorite authors and illustrators. Or ask your librarian to recommend similar books.



Books to delight your early reader

The Moon Shines Down by Margaret Wise Brown (Thomas Nelson). Children all over the world see the moon—and the moon sees all of them! This newly discovered book by the author of *Good Night Moon* is sure to delight your little one.

Miss Spider's Tea Party by David Kirk (Scholastic). The bugs are worried—does their eight-legged hostess really plan to gobble them up? No! Miss Spider just wants her winged friends to join her for snacks!

Partner with your child's preschool teacher



What do you and your child's preschool teacher have in common? You're on the same team! So if the teacher tells you your child may have a problem or issue at preschool:

- **Don't get defensive.** Instead, listen carefully to what the teacher has to say.
- **Ask questions.** If you're unsure about what the teacher is describing, ask her to clarify. It's your right as a parent to know exactly what's going on with your child.
- **Follow up.** Keep in touch with your child's teacher even after the problem is resolved. It'll make it that much easier to communicate if other issues crop up later.



Q: My preschooler is a little wobbly when it comes to holding a pencil. Is that okay?

A: Yes! Fine motor skills—which help children perform delicate tasks like holding pencils—take time to develop. To help your child sharpen her fine motor skills, give her lots of chances to do things like scribbling, rolling play dough and cutting with safety scissors.

Source: "Fine-Motor Skill Development: Tips for Parents," FamilyEducation.com, <http://school.familyeducation.com/growth-and-development/body-parts/38715.html?detoured=1>.

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

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