

BUILDING READERS®

How Families Can Help Children Get Ready to Read

Kingston K-14 School District

Fill your preschooler's winter break with language-learning opportunities

The end of the calendar year is a busy time for many families. With all that you have to do, you might be tempted to just plop your preschooler in front of a screen.

Don't toss school-day habits aside just because school's out for a week or two! Continue to limit recreational screen activities and keep your child on the road to language learning.

It's worth your time to:

- **Visit** the library.
- **Listen** to audiobooks.
- **Read** together every day.
- **Invent** stories together.
- **Sing** songs and recite nursery rhymes.
- **Visit** a children's museum and talk about what you see.
- **Have** conversations while playing games and doing puzzles.



Movement can improve letter learning

A new study reports that when children combine movement with learning sounds letters make, their ability to recognize letter sounds improves. Here's a fun activity to try with your child:

1. **Write the letters** of the alphabet on sticky notes. Put only one letter on each note.
2. **Stick the notes** in different locations around your home.
3. **Challenge your child** to run around the house to find one note.
4. **Have your child** read the letter and say the sound (or sounds) of the letter before running on to the next one.
5. **See how many** sticky notes your child can collect!

Source: L. Damsgaard and others, "Effects of Eight Weeks with Embodied Learning on 5-6-Year-Old Danish Children's Pre-reading Skills and Word Reading Skills," *Educational Psychology Review*, Springer Science+Business Media.

Explore seasonal reading activities

There are plenty of winter-themed reading activities you can do with your child. Just ask your local librarian!

Along with giving you information on locating books, the librarian can fill you in on seasonal:

- **Reading programs.**
- **Book releases.**
- **Craft projects.**
- **Websites** or apps for preschoolers.
- **Events** for the whole family.



Give the gift of reading

New books may not be at the top of your child's holiday wish list. But that shouldn't stop you from giving a few!

Opening a new book may get your child excited about reading. And that excitement (and the lifelong love of books it can ignite) is a gift that will last way beyond the holiday season.



Have some fun reading and writing

There are many ways to help your child build reading and writing skills this season. You can:

- **Ask your child** to help you make shopping lists. Talk about the letters and words you write.
- **Help your child** make holiday or thank-you cards.
- **Take your child** with you as you shop for different gifts. Point out the words on the packaging that tell about each item you buy.



Ask your child's preschool teacher about reading readiness and progress

Parent-teacher conferences give you a chance to check in with the preschool teacher about your child's progress in the classroom. A mid-year conference will help you and the teacher work together to make the rest of the year the best it can be.

Conferences are also a great time to learn more about your child's reading development. You might ask:

- **What reading-related activities** does my child enjoy during the school day?
- **How is my child progressing** with reading-readiness skills?
- **Are there any skills** my child needs to improve? How can I help?
- **What goals do you have** for my child for the rest of this year?
- **What can I do** at home to keep my child excited about reading and learning in general?



Try book-based storytelling

Boost language skills and creativity by using your child's books as a springboard for telling stories:

- **Reread loved books.** Have your child retell the plot and turn the page when it's time to move to the next one.
- **Read a wordless picture book.** Ask your child to use the pictures to explain what is happening.
- **Use a hand puppet** to tell the story and to ask questions. Then let your child hold the puppet and retell the story.

Join your child on a winter literacy walk

It's easy to enjoy reading-readiness time outside with your child—even in the winter. Just bundle up and get moving! Walking around your neighborhood can promote conversation and boost language skills. While on your walk:

- **Read signs,** street names and numbers together. See what words, letters and numbers your child can point out.
- **Collect leaves,** twigs, rocks or pinecones. Talk about their texture, shape and color. Introduce new words such as *brittle*, *rigid* and *jagged*.
- **Encourage your child** to ask questions. If you don't know an answer, look it up online together when you get home.



Books to delight your early reader

- ***Scaredy Squirrel*** by Mélanie Watt. Scaredy Squirrel adheres to a strict schedule every day, and he makes sure safety comes first ... until one day, when he bravely ventures outside his nest.
- ***Put It on the List!*** by Kristen Darbyshire. A family discovers just how important the grocery list is when they have macaroni but no cheese, peanut butter but no jelly, and even cookies but no milk!
- ***A Splendid Friend, Indeed*** by Suzanne Bloom. Bear wants to read, write and think quietly. But Goose wants to talk all the time! Will this unlikely pair become friends?



Q: Besides reading together, how can I improve my four-year-old's vocabulary and language skills?

A: In addition to reading, expose your child to new places. Go to the zoo, a park or a construction site together and ask your child to describe it. You can also use new words at home. For example, you might describe the bath water as *tepid* instead of simply as *warm*. And be sure to avoid using baby talk when you talk with your child.

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Publisher: Doris McLaughlin.

Publisher Emeritus: John H. Wherry, Ed.D.

Editor: Rebecca Hasty Miyares.

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