

BUILDING READERS®

How Families Can Help Children Get Ready to Read

Valdosta City Schools
Parent Engagement Newsletter

Foster your preschooler's love of reading as early as possible

Want your preschooler to get a head start on building vocabulary, independence and self-confidence? Then instill a love of reading! Here are a few things you can do to encourage your child to love books and reading:

- **Read, read, read.** The more you expose your child to books, the more likely she'll become a reader.
- **Make her the star.** When you read a favorite tale, replace the main character's name with your child's. She'll love hearing her name in the starring role!
- **Ask her to "read"** a book to you or a stuffed animal. She can make up the story as she turns the pages and looks at the pictures.
- **Give books as gifts** to signify the importance of reading. Show her that books are something to celebrate!



"Books are the quietest and most constant of friends."

—Charles William Eliot

Turn screen time into learning time

Setting limits on recreational screen time and choosing quality programs is important. When your child does watch, use TV to build language and pre-reading skills. You can:

- **Watch along with your child.** Talk about what you see and ask him questions about it.
- **Build reading-related activities** around the show you watch. Check out books about a featured topic. For example, if the show was about dinosaurs, find a book about a Triceratops.
- **Be a good role model.** Limit the amount of TV you watch, too. Make sure your child sees you turning off the TV to read.

Practice writing the alphabet all around the house

Now that your child is learning the letters of the alphabet, you two can have some fun by writing the letters in a variety of places. Write:



- **In the bathtub.** Let your child write letters on the side of the tub with shaving cream. (Supervise carefully!)
- **In the kitchen.** Sprinkle flour or sugar onto a baking sheet. Then have your child write letters using her finger.
- **On the driveway.** Have your child write big letters with sidewalk chalk.

It's OK to read and reread

Your child may ask to read the same story over and over—and that's OK! When you reread familiar stories, your child's memory of its vocabulary words improves. He also becomes familiar with its sequence—the story's beginning, middle and end.



Build enthusiasm for writing

Writing and reading are connected skills. To interest your budding reader in writing tools, make a pencil holder. Here's how:

1. **Wrap** a clean dry can or jar with construction or contact paper.
2. **Help** your child use stickers, markers or glitter to decorate it.
3. **Let** your child pick some favorite pencils to store inside the can.



Follow these tips for choosing books to read with your preschooler

With so many books out there, it can be hard to figure out which to read with your child. Keep these tips in mind when you're looking for new titles:



- **See if you like it.** Read the book's opening pages. Are they engaging? Funny? Interesting? If you like the book, chances are your child will enjoy it, too.
- **Notice the artwork.** Many children love big, bold pictures, so your child may enjoy stories accompanied by splashy illustrations. And unique artwork can lead to interesting conversations. Choose books with one picture per page.
- **Ask an expert for input.** If you're searching for books at the library, ask a librarian to suggest titles on your child's favorite topics. You can also look online for popular books for kids your child's age.

Add life and laughter to reading

When you read with your child, point to pictures and talk about the things you see. If the book is about animals, see which animals he can identify. Then, discuss what you both know about those animals.



Laugh at the silly things you read. Read with expression and use different voices. If a word sounds funny, say it again. The sillier, the better!

Storytelling can spark your child's creativity

When you make up stories with your child, you are helping him learn how language can be put together to tell a tale. And that's a critical foundation for reading. Here's a fun way to do it:

1. **Put small items** in an empty box—a feather, a seashell, a penny, etc. Have your child pull out two items.
2. **Make up a story** based on the items your child chose. For example, if he picked a feather and a penny, you might start like this: "This story is about a little bird who went to the store."
3. **Ask your child to add details.** What color is the bird? What type of store is he going to? Finish the story together.



Books to delight your early reader

- **Feast for 10** by Cathryn Falwell. Count along with this family as they prepare a special meal—going to the grocery store together, cooking yummy food and cleaning up afterward.
- **Little Pea** by Amy Krouse Rosenthal. Little Pea hates eating candy for dinner—but if he doesn't, he won't get spinach for dessert. Picky eaters will especially love this funny book!
- **Ice Boy** by David Ezra Stein. Even though his parents tell him to stay home in the freezer, Ice Boy dreams of seeing the world. So, he goes off on an adventure. Along the way, he transforms in accordance with the stages of the water cycle.



Q: My four-year-old daughter won't keep quiet at the library. What can I do?

A: Now that many libraries are open again, it's natural for young children to be excited ... and loud. Have your child bring a stuffed animal or doll. Before you go, tell her to remind her reading buddy of library rules—walk softly, speak quietly, etc. Ask her to set a good example for her companion by following the rules herself.

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