

BUILDING READERS®

How Families Can Help Children Get Ready to Read

Bedford County Public Schools
Title I Elementary Schools

Let Mother Nature provide reading inspiration for your preschooler

Now that it's spring, take language learning outside. It's a terrific way to spend time with your child and boost reading smarts. Here are three fresh-air activities to try:

- 1. Outdoor story time.** Gather your child, a blanket and a stack of books, and share stories outside. The change of scenery may make you and your child even more enthusiastic about reading.
- 2. Collect story elements.** Take a stroll outside and gather leaves, flower buds, etc. At home, help your child paste the items onto paper and create a book. Later, have your child "read" the story of your walk.
- 3. Learn about plants.** Read a book about how plants grow from seeds. Together, learn about what plants need to grow.



Help your child connect with characters

When preschoolers recognize things they have in common with a book character, they tend to get more excited about reading. Identifying with the characters in a story helps children become more invested and engaged, which can lead to greater comprehension.

To foster this type of connection:

- **Read books related to your child's interests.** Whether it's creating art or fishing, identify the things your child loves to do and seek out tales about them. If you're stuck, ask a librarian for suggestions.
- **Discuss similarities.** As you're reading together, point out each time your child shares a bond with a character. "Look, honey. The astronaut said the moon is the best place in outer space. You love the moon, too!"

Tame recreational screen use

To create more time for reading, keep screen use to a minimum. Here's how:

- **Be a good role model.** Don't reach for the remote or your phone when you could reach for a book instead.
- **Make reading material available.** Fill your home with books and magazines.
- **Keep digital devices** out of your child's bedroom. This is one of the easiest ways to reduce screen use.



Imaginative play boosts reading skills

Encourage your child to act out stories. While pretending to be a favorite character or making up new adventures, your child will be using words in creative ways and new contexts, which is great for building the vocabulary and language skills needed for reading.



Get hands-on with the alphabet

Using alphabet magnets on the fridge is one way to teach your child the ABCs. But it's not the only way.

Nurture creativity and alphabet knowledge by having your child:

- **Shape** letters out of pipe cleaners.
- **Bake** letter-shaped cookies or pretzels.
- **Circle** specific letters in the newspaper.
- **Write** letters in finger paint.
- **Play** with ABC stamps.



Look for books and more at the library

Public libraries offer many ways to help your child get excited about reading. Once every week or two, make a family trip to the children's section of the nearest library and help your child find some new books. While you're there:

- **Attend story time.** Most young children enjoy hearing a librarian make a book come alive. Sometimes children even get to participate in a craft related to the book during story time. And sitting still at the library is great practice for reading time in school.
- **Look for magazines, audiobooks and movies.** Help your child explore other types of media and experience stories in many different ways.
- **Sign your child up** for a library card. Preschoolers gain pride and confidence from being in charge of their own books.



Anytime can be reading time!

Reading time does not have to follow a strict schedule—you and your child can share a book any time of the day. To get the most out of reading together:

- **Say yes** as often as possible when your child asks you to sit down and read.
- **Read at different times** of day. Your child's preferred reading time may change with age.
- **Pick up books** when you're both relaxed and just start reading.



Use old mail to create reading projects

Before you throw away magazines, advertisements, catalogs and junk mail, use them to help your preschooler build verbal and reading skills. Here's how:

- **Ask your child to find** certain letters or words in a piece of mail. Can your child identify the beginning letter of items in the pictures?
- **Point to a picture** on a piece of mail. Challenge your child to make up a story about it.
- **Have your child** use images to tell a story in sequence. Together, cut out pictures and glue them onto a piece of paper. Then, ask your child to use them in order to tell a story.



Books to delight your early reader

- **Can We Help? Kids Volunteering to Help Their Communities** by George Ancona. Everyone, no matter how old or young, is able to give back to their community. This book explores ways that kids can make a difference.
- **Princess in Training** by Tammy Sauer. Feisty Viola doesn't want to wear tiaras and frilly pink dresses. She'd rather skateboard and karate-chop! What's the young princess to do?
- **Squeak, Rumble, Whomp! Whomp! Whomp!** by Wynton Marsalis. Listen carefully as a collection of everyday noises, from a tick-tocking clock to whooshing winds, combine to make a beautiful symphony.



Q: My preschooler is afraid to approach the library's checkout desk. What should I do?

A: It's normal for preschoolers to feel intimidated by unfamiliar adults. Ease your child's fears by role-playing at home. Set out some books, sit at a table and pretend to be the librarian. Your preschooler can be the patron. After choosing a book, have your child practice handing it to you, along with a library card. Your preschooler will soon see that checking out books is fun!

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