

BUILDING READERS®

How Families Can Help Children Get Ready to Read

St. Louis County Schools

Enrich your preschooler's summer with regular family reading time

Preschool may be finishing up for the year, but story time shouldn't be! Reading with your child is important all year long. To make sure your child's summer is reading-rich:

- **Schedule reading time.** Even if your days are less structured than they are during the school year, commit to spending at least 20 minutes each day reading with your child. You will show your preschooler that books are a worthwhile part of daily life.
- **Combine reading** with other activities. If you are going to the park, cool off in the shade with a book. Or, pack a lunch and have a reading picnic.
- **Visit the library.** Review the library's summer hours and schedule of activities. The library is a cool place to hang out all year round!



Try three fun summer activities to reinforce reading readiness

Frequent practice will keep your child's literacy skills strong over the summer. Here are three fun ideas to try:

1. **Show and share.** Once a week, have your child pick a special book and explain what makes it a favorite. This activity boosts verbal skills and creativity.
2. **Review letters.** Let your child go through some of the junk mail you receive. Say, "Circle all of the letters that you know."
3. **Stock a summer shelf.** Find interesting books at yard sales, thrift shops or neighborhood swaps. Put them on a shelf marked Special Summer Stories. Read one with your child every day!

Follow three tips for choosing books

There are so many books for young children—how do you choose?

Here's some help:

- **Match the length** of a story with your child's attention span. Consider two short stories instead of one long one.
- **Don't worry** about how old a book is. A story is new if your child hasn't heard it before.
- **Stop reading** if your child doesn't like the book. Reading together should be a pleasure for both of you.



Point to the ABCs

Singing the alphabet song is a great way to teach young children the alphabet. But it's important for them to be able to recognize the individual letters.

To reinforce your child's knowledge of specific letters, sing the song together slowly as you point to each letter.



Suggest independent reading

In addition to reading together, encourage your preschooler to look at books independently. It's OK if your child doesn't know the words. "Pretend reading" has many benefits.

When children make up their own stories, they use their imagination and build cognitive skills by "reading" the pictures. And they learn just how much fun reading can be.



Support your child's emerging writing skills

Whether you're going on a trip or staying at home this summer, be sure to plan some activities that your preschooler can do to strengthen writing skills. Your child can:

- **Write postcards and letters.** These can be from a vacation place or your hometown. Have your child write to family members or friends. It's fine if the "writing" is mostly scribbles. Ask your child to read it to you and then write down what it says.
- **Keep a journal.** Each week, ask your child to fill a piece of paper with words or pictures about something you saw or did together. Offer prompts if necessary: "What did you do at the park?" Collect the papers and staple them together for a great memento. Read the journal together throughout the year to remember how much fun you both had over the summer.



Travel time = time to talk

Planning to spend a lot of time on the go this summer? Make use of the time you'll have in the car, on the bus or on an airplane—spend it talking with your child. Conversations are an ideal way for kids to practice their language skills—and they make the miles fly by.



Ask your child to tell you about everything from favorite books to best friends. You'll reach your destination before you know it.

Make the most of your read-alouds

Reading aloud to children is one of the best ways to get them interested in books. When reading to your child:

- **Be expressive.** From funny voices to exaggerated gestures, the more you "get into" the story, the more your child will, too.
- **Go slow.** Give your child a chance to enjoy the pictures and process the story.
- **Pause often.** Encourage your child to ask questions and make comments during story time. These aren't interruptions. These interactions are proof that your child is engaged in the tale!



Books to delight your early reader

- ***Zoomer's Summer Snowstorm*** by Ned Young. It's way too hot to snow! But that's exactly what happens when an eager pup gets carried away with a snow-cone machine!
- ***The Moogees Move House*** by Leslie McGuirk. Mama and Papa Moogee are looking for a new house. Will they find the perfect one for the whole Moogee family?
- ***Oh Dear, Geoffrey!*** by Gemma O'Neill. Geoffrey the Giraffe is trying to meet others on the savanna, but his clumsiness keeps him from forming friendships. Until he stretches his long neck up, that is.



Q: My child adores books, but can be rough with them. How can I teach my preschooler to be more gentle?

A: By being patient. As you read books together, talk about the right way to treat them. "We pick up the book with both hands. We turn each page carefully. We put it away gently when we're finished."

Do this each time you read together, and your preschooler will eventually get the message.

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P.O. Box 7474, Fairfax Station, VA 22039-7474

1-800-756-5525

www.parent-institute.com