

BUILDING READERS®

How Families Can Help Children Get Ready to Read

St. Louis County Schools

Focus on the story when reading e-books with your preschooler

We live in a digital age. From tablets to websites full of digital books and e-books, reading a story online is a bit different from opening a traditional book with your child. Instead of turning the page, your child may be swiping across a screen.

To help your child get the most out of reading e-books:

- **Select e-books** with engaging stories, interesting language and interactive features that support the text.
- **Read the book** in text-only mode first. While e-books are often full of exciting and fun interactive features, they can distract from what's most important: Reading the story!
- **Talk about the story.** As you do with all types of books, engage your child while you read. Talk about what you see and ask your child questions about what you are reading.



Practice writing the alphabet everywhere!

Now that your child has been learning the letters of the alphabet, you can have some fun together writing the letters around your home. Help your child write letters in the:

- **Bathroom.** Let your child use shaving cream to write letters in the bathtub or sink.
- **Kitchen.** Sprinkle flour or sugar on wax paper. Then, have your child write letters in it using a finger.
- **Driveway.** Supply sidewalk chalk for writing big letters on the pavement.



Demonstrate how you read

When reading aloud, use your finger to guide your child's eyes along the text. Point to each word as you say it to help your child connect the visual information with the spoken words.

Then, have your child to use a finger to track the words as you read.



To encourage reading, involve the family

Reading aloud as a family is a powerful way to foster a love of learning and create lasting memories. To turn reading into a family affair:

- **Involve the whole clan.** Encourage grandparents, aunts, uncles, and older siblings to participate in story time.
- **Create a family audiobook.** Record yourselves reading a story together to create a unique and personalized listening experience.
- **Host a family book club.** Once a week, gather everyone together to discuss the most recent book they've read.
- **Start the day with stories.** Make reading a part of your morning routine by enjoying books together at breakfast.

Help your preschooler establish responsible reading habits

Did your child just jump up to grab a board game and leave a bunch of books scattered on the floor? If so, tell your child to come back and clean up.

Preschoolers need to learn to be responsible with their books and to put them away when they are finished reading.



Cognitive skills enhance reading readiness

Boosting your preschooler's *cognitive* (thinking) skills can be easy and fun. These skills help your child become a passionate learner and a better reader! Strong cognitive skills allow children to analyze and process information, which enhances reading comprehension.

To bolster cognitive skills, try some of these engaging activities together:

- **Group objects** by size or color.
- **Play matching games.**
- **Read and talk about books.**
- **Talk about opposites** (*hot* and *cold*; *light* and *dark*).
- **Toss a ball back and forth.**
- **Build with blocks.**
- **Complete puzzles.**



Make a scrapbook to build language and motor skills

When your preschooler experiences something new—like a visit to a farm or the dentist—make a scrapbook page together.

Ask about what your child saw and did during the experience. Then, have your child draw a picture about it and dictate a caption for you to write.



Every so often, read through the scrapbook with your child.

Keep an eye out for reading milestones

As a budding bookworm, your preschooler is learning new reading-readiness skills every day. In fact, by the time kindergarten starts, your child will probably be able to:

- **Repeat sentences** up to nine words long.
- **Grasp time-related concepts** like *later* and *soon*.
- **Name common objects** in picture books or magazines.
- **Understand and use simple prepositions** (like *on*, *off* and *under*).
- **Use grammatically correct speech** (at least most of the time).

Keep in mind: These milestones are only guidelines. Every child develops at their own pace. That goes for your child, too.



Books to delight your early reader

- ***ABC Love*** by Christiane Engel. This beautifully illustrated book promotes family togetherness and connects each letter of the alphabet to a related concept, such as love, affection and warmth.
- ***Eat Your Peas, Ivy Louise!*** by Leo Landry. Ivy Louise is told repeatedly to eat her peas—but she's distracted by the circus that the peas are putting on!
- ***Once Upon a Banana*** by Jennifer Armstrong. Follow along and see what happens when a banana peel is tossed on a city sidewalk. This exciting story is told completely by street signs in the illustrations.



Q: How important is it to read to my preschooler every day? Does it really matter if I skip some days?

A: In a word, *yes!* Think of it this way: Just as you model honesty and kindness for your child, you're also modeling the importance of reading and language skills. By reading to your preschooler regularly, you demonstrate that these skills are valuable and essential for success in life. When you're short on time, just pick a short book!

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