

BUILDING READERS®

How Families Can Help Children Get Ready to Read

Mt. Olive Primary School

Enrich your preschooler's vocabulary during the winter months

The winter holidays aren't just for fun. They're also a perfect time to grow your child's vocabulary. To expose her to new words during the holidays and beyond:

- **Make a winter dictionary.** Staple several sheets of paper together to make a booklet. Label it *My Winter Dictionary*. Write one word—such as *sled*—per page. Have your child draw pictures of each object under its name. She can also trace over the letters of the words you have written to build both fine motor and pre-reading skills.
- **Read a variety of books** about winter with your child. Ask the librarian for good ones to try. And don't just read fiction. Try reading different genres, such as poetry and nonfiction. Your child is sure to hear new words.



"If one cannot enjoy reading a book over and over again, there is no use in reading it at all."

—Oscar Wilde

Help your child learn about nouns

Even though your child may not learn formal grammar for several years, you can still help him learn about *nouns* (the part of speech referring to names people, places and things). Create flashcards with pictures of people, places and things your child is familiar with. Then:

1. **Show your child** a card and have him identify what the picture shows (a book, for example).
2. **Have your child** place the card in the correct category: person, place or thing.
3. **Explain that** people, places and things are all types of nouns.

Pictures build interest in reading

Your child can learn from pictures even before she can read or write. Together, look at the pictures in advertisements, catalogs and books. Then:

- **Make up stories** about what you see in each picture. Ask your child questions, such as, *Why do you think the family is smiling? What do you think they are saying to each other?*
- **Challenge your child** to find something in your home that is also in the picture.



Nurture a love of reading

To help your child love reading:

- **Establish** family rituals, such as having family reading time once a week.
- **Encourage** him to retell stories.
- **Read** his favorite books over and over.
- **Relate** stories to real life.
- **Let** him "catch" you reading for pleasure.



Go beyond X and O when playing tic-tac-toe

The next time you and your child are playing tic-tac-toe, mix things up a little. Instead of using the letters X and O as your markers, why not use A and B? Or Z and W?

Let your child choose new letters each time you play. Keep changing letters, and soon she will recognize the whole alphabet!

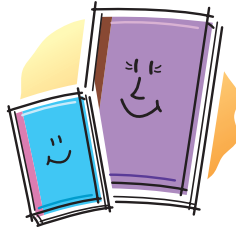


Take a literacy walk with your child

Enjoy reading time outside with your child—just bundle up and get moving. Walking around your neighborhood is a great time to encourage conversation and boost your child’s language skills.

Next time you’re on a walk with your child:

- **Read** signs, street names and numbers, and names on mailboxes. The word *stop* is an important sight word for children to learn. See what words, letters and numbers your child can point out on her own.
- **Collect** leaves, rocks or twigs. Count them. Ask your child questions about their texture, shape and color. Use new words such as *brittle*, *rigid* and *jagged* to help build her vocabulary.
- **Encourage** your child to ask questions. If you don’t know an answer, see if you can look it up or check out a children’s book on the subject the next time you go to the library.



Build fine motor skills while reading with your child

Fine motor skills—small, intricate movements, especially of the hand muscles—are integral to reading and writing. To help your child develop them, have her:

- **Turn the page** while you’re reading together.
- **Move her finger** under the words while you read.
- **Scribble and draw** frequently to illustrate stories she tells you.



‘Tis the season for some ABC fun

Add a few seasonal activities to your child’s language learning. Here are a few to try:

- **What starts with this letter?** Choose a letter and remind your child of the sound it makes. Together, look around your home for winter items that begin with that letter.
- **Holiday letters.** Glue sheets of gift wrap onto cardboard. Draw big letters and cut them out for instant holiday ABCs.
- **Letter cookies.** If you are baking cookies, include some shaped like the letters in your child’s name. Have him help decorate them (which also builds fine motor skills).



Books to delight your early reader

- **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 without jelly, and even cookies but no milk!
- **Goodnight Everyone** by Chris Haughton. In this lulling bedtime story, all the woodland animals are sleepy—except Little Bear. How will Great Big Bear get her cub to fall asleep?
- **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: I correct my child’s grammar whenever she says something incorrectly, but it seems to frustrate her. What should I do instead?

A: No one likes having mistakes pointed out constantly, and your child is no different.

Instead of blatantly correcting her, subtly show her the proper way to speak. If she says, “I goed to the park with Grandma today,” reply, “You went to the park today? Wow, that sounds like fun!”

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