

BUILDING READERS®

How Families Can Help Children Get Ready to Read

Monessen City School District

Enhance your child's emerging reading skills with interactive rhyming games

The better children are at rhyming, the better prepared they are to begin reading. Rhymes help young children learn the sounds letters make. Try playing these rhyming games together:

- 1. Rhyming Box.** Fill a box with a few objects. Have your child choose one item from the box and name it. Then ask, "Can you think of a word that rhymes with that item?"
- 2. Find the Rhyme.** Draw a scene—like a tree with a swing under a sun. Say a word that rhymes with an item in the scene. Have your child circle the object that rhymes with it.
- 3. What Do I See?** Think of an object in the room and give your child rhyming clues about it. If the object is a *table*, you might say "I see a *noble wable*."



Practice writing the alphabet

To help your child get familiar with the letters of the alphabet, practice writing them 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 a finger.
- **On the driveway.** Have your child write big letters with sidewalk chalk.



Spot reading problems early

It's never too early to watch out for potential reading difficulties. Kids who have trouble with sounds in words often have difficulties with reading later.

Keep an eye out for signs that your child is struggling with rhymes or has trouble recognizing words that start with the same sound. If you have concerns, talk with your child's preschool teacher or pediatrician.



Focus on listening and speaking skills

Building strong listening and speaking skills is crucial to your child's language development—which is the foundation for reading. To develop these skills:

- **Speak to your child clearly** and correctly. Try not to use "baby talk."
- **Have back-and-forth conversations often.** Ask questions and encourage your preschooler to answer.
- **Model listening behavior.** Make eye contact when your child is talking and avoid interrupting.
- **Give multi-step directions.** "Please find your shoes. Bring them here."
- **Encourage your preschooler to express** feelings and emotions with words.

Fun activities strengthen your preschooler's thinking skills

Activities that build children's cognitive abilities also help them become strong readers. Offer your preschooler lots of opportunities to:

- **Solve** jigsaw puzzles.
- **Paint** and draw.
- **Explore** the great outdoors.
- **Play** memory games.
- **Invent** stories.



Encourage your child to practice writing

Your preschooler's scribbles may be meaningless to you, but they're actual words to your child. So don't discourage your rookie writer by saying those squiggles aren't "real" letters and numbers. Instead, encourage your child to keep writing! Here's how:

- **Provide the proper tools.** "This pad of paper and these crayons are yours. You can use them to write or draw any time you want."
- **Ask your child to help.** "I'm making a grocery list. How about if you make one, too?"
- **Exchange notes.** Demonstrate the importance of reading and writing for communication. Write your child a short note and read it together. Then, ask your child to write you back.
- **Nurture creativity.** Have your child dictate a story to you while you write it down. Then, encourage your child to sound out some of the words and "read" it back to you.



Make time for family reading

In a world filled with distractions and digital screens, it's not always easy for families to carve out time for reading. But that doesn't make it any less important.

Reading as a family nurtures your child's skills, fosters emotional connections, and lays the foundation for a life-long love of learning. So, establish a daily family reading time, get everyone involved and stick to it!



Inspire fall reading fun with pumpkins

Celebrate October and harvest season with your child by reading a book about pumpkins, such as *The Roll-Away Pumpkin* by Junia Wonders. Then, make up a story about pumpkins together—and act it out with finger puppets. To make them:

1. **Cut small pumpkin shapes** out of orange construction paper.
2. **Have your child** decorate them.
3. **Tape a loop of string** on the back of each puppet for your finger.

You will both have fun acting out the story, and your preschooler will be building valuable motor and language skills, too!



Books to delight your early reader

- ***Anna Hibiscus' Song*** by Atinuke. Anna Hibiscus sits in a mango tree in her yard, happily watching her family members go about their days. As her joy grows, she invents a song that captures her happiness.
- ***Sleepyheads*** by Sandra J. Howatt. It's time for bed, and creatures everywhere are tucked in. From caves to nests to beds, every sleepyhead is cozy and ready to get some needed rest.
- ***Paul Thurlby's Alphabet*** by Paul Thurlby. From A is for "Awesome" to Z is for "Zip," the letters in this alphabet book transform themselves into the things they stand for.



Q: My child gets restless during story time. How can I ensure that my preschooler will enjoy it?

A: You can't force your child to enjoy reading, but you can make reading enjoyable. Start by sharing stories when your child is in a good mood. Find books your child likes and read them often. When your preschooler gets antsy or distracted, take a break. When your child is ready to focus again, try reading a new book.

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

1-800-756-5525

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