

BUILDING READERS®

How Families Can Help Children Get Ready to Read

Mount Vernon City School District

Strengthen your child's visual memory to boost reading readiness skills

Visual memory is a crucial component of learning and reading. It's what allows children to look at printed letters and words and successfully decode them in their minds.

However, most preschoolers need practice to develop visual memory. Here's a fun game to play:

1. **Select a detailed picture** from one of your child's picture books.
2. **Let your child look** at the picture for a brief moment—10-15 seconds.
3. **Ask simple questions** to see what your child remembers. "What color was the cat?" "How many people did you see?" "Was the sun out or was it raining?"



As visual memory improves, decrease the amount of time your child gets to look at the picture before you ask the questions.

Source: A. Ne'eman and S. Shaul, "Readiness or Impairment," *Frontiers in Psychology*, Frontiers Media.

Enjoy rainy days at your local library

The only predictable thing about March's weather is that it's unpredictable. So the next time your outdoor plans are rained out, take your child to your local library for some indoor fun.

In addition to children's books, help your child explore:

- **Resource books.** Find an encyclopedia or an atlas. Open it to a page full of interesting images (like dinosaurs or planets) and ask your child to talk about the pictures.
- **Computer games.** Ask the librarian which ones have the best language-learning features.
- **Audiobooks.** Try to find one that has an accompanying print version. Then, while you're cooking dinner, your child can "read" it independently!

Fight the enemies of reading

Can you name the three biggest enemies of reading? They are screen time, noise and families who don't read. The good news is that you can control all of these. Here's how:

- **Limit screen use.** For children ages two to five years, doctors recommend no more than one hour per day.
- **Provide plenty of quiet time** for your child to look at books and read.
- **Read yourself.** Let your child see you enjoying a variety of reading materials.



Show your child how to get crafty with bookmarks

Did you know that March is National Craft Month? Help your child celebrate by demonstrating how to make book-marks by drawing on strips of paper. Then, read some longer stories and put the bookmarks to use.



Encourage creative play

Creative play isn't just fun—it's a powerful tool that fuels imagination and builds the thinking skills essential for reading comprehension.

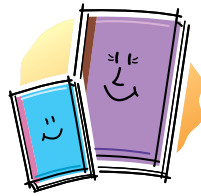
One way to encourage your preschooler's creativity is to look at the illustrations in a favorite book together. Then, give your child crayons and paper and say, "It's your turn to draw your own pictures to keep the story going."



Help your preschooler welcome spring with some outdoor story time!

Did you know that reading outdoors can sharpen your child's attention and listening skills? It's true! Learning to tune out distractions, such as bird and traffic sounds, strengthens your child's ability to focus. Here are three ways to start:

- 1. Go on a book picnic.** Grab some books, a blanket and some snacks and head outside. Stretch out in the sunshine and read together.
- 2. Head to the park.** Enjoy the swings and playground, and then relax on a park bench for some quality reading time.
- 3. Put some "splash" in stories.** Don't let a few raindrops keep you inside! Gather some waterproof bathtub books and read them together under a covered area.



Ask questions to build thinking skills

Advanced thinking skills help young children analyze, critique and evaluate information that they read or hear. Give your child some practice by asking questions in different situations.

When reading with your child, pause and ask:

- **What do you think** will happen next?
- **Why do you think** the story ended the way it did?
- **Why do you think** the author included a particular event or element in the story?

When going somewhere new, ask:

- **How is this place** different from somewhere you've been before?
- **Does this place** remind you of somewhere we've been?



Q: I always try to read interesting, colorful books during story time, but my preschooler is rarely interested in any of them. How can I get my child to want to read?

A: Let your preschooler pick the books! If your child feels in charge during story-sharing time, the whole process may seem more exciting. Head to the library and ask your preschool to select several books to check out. Then, right before story time each day, ask your child to pick the book you will read together.

Create a musical picture book

You and your child can turn simple song lyrics into a visual story using a rebus format. Help your preschooler replace frequently repeated words in a song with small drawings.

For example, if you're working on the song "Mary Had a Little Lamb," your child could draw a girl's picture to stand in for the word *Mary* and a lamb's picture for the word *lamb*.



Books to delight your early reader

- ***I Can Be Anything*** by Jerry Spinelli. There are so many things one little boy wants to be when he grows up, from a silly joke teller to a pumpkin grower. This book will encourage kids to consider a wide range of possibilities for the future!
- ***What Shall We Play?*** by Sue Heap. Lily May wants to play fairies, but Matt wants to play trees and Martha wants to play cars. The friends learn to compromise so everyone gets to play.
- ***Cold Little Duck, Duck, Duck*** by Lisa Westberg Peters. A little duck returns to the pond too early—the water is frozen, and she's cold! But slowly, it starts to warm up, and spring is on its way.



Building Readers®

How Families Can Help Children Get Ready to Read

Publisher: Doris McLaughlin.
 Publisher Emeritus: John H. Wherry, Ed.D.
 Editor: Rebecca Hasty Miyares.

Copyright © 2026, The Parent Institute®
 (a division of PaperClip Media, Inc.)
 P.O. Box 7474, Fairfax Station, VA 22039-7474
 1-800-756-5525
www.parent-institute.com