

# Building Readers®

How Families Can Help Children Become Better Readers

Read to Succeed  
United Way of Metropolitan Nashville

## Books are meant to be shared

What's better than curling up with a good book? Sharing it with someone you love! So make reading a family affair. Sharing books is a wonderful way for families to bond, explore their cultures and stay connected.

To get started with a "family story time," try some of the titles below. They're all kid-friendly and each one deals with families.

- *Aunt Flossie's Hats (and Crab Cakes Later)* by Elizabeth Fitzgerald Howard.
- *Black is brown is tan* by Arnold Adoff.
- *Gettin' Through Thursday* by Melrose Cooper.
- *Dim Sum for Everyone* by Grace Lin.
- *Cherry Pies and Lullabies* by Lynn Reiser.

**Source:** Susan Hepler and Maria Salvadore, *Books Your Kids Will Talk About!* ISBN: 0-8106-2051-0 (National Education Association, 202/833-4000, [www.nea.org](http://www.nea.org)).



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### Make your home reader-friendly

Teach your child to love books and you'll have a lifelong reader. One way to do this is by making your home reader-friendly. Here's how:

- Keep books, magazines and other reading materials down low where your child can reach them.
- Visit the library together regularly.
- Talk about books with your child often.
- Play rhyming games.
- Make reading part of your daily life. Let your child see you reading for pleasure.
- Never force your child to learn to read too early.
- Limit family "screen time." This includes the TV, computer and video games.
- Talk to your child about the sounds letters make.

**Source:** Jane M. Healy, Ph.D., *Your Child's Growing Mind*, ISBN: 0-7679-1615-8 (Broadway Books, 212/782-9000, [www.broadwaybooks.com](http://www.broadwaybooks.com)).

## Keep your little learner in preschool



Sure, preschool is full of terrific learning opportunities, but your child can't enjoy them if he's not in class! Even though he's very young, his school attendance still matters.

To make sure your little language learner attends preschool regularly:

- Stick to a simple before-school routine each morning.
- Don't make appointments during preschool hours.
- Save vacations for the summer or holiday breaks.

### Using reading resources



Looking for good children's books? Visit the California Department of Education's Recommended Literature page ([www.cde.ca.gov/ci/rl/ll](http://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/rl/ll)). Click "Search List" and plug in what you seek. Voilà! Out pop the titles.

## Conversation leads to language learning



Want to boost your child's language skills? Chat with her! The more you talk with your child, the more she'll be exposed to new words and ideas.

When talking with her, remember to:

- Speak clearly.
- Share interesting stories and ideas.
- Be enthusiastic.
- Give her a chance to respond to what you're saying.
- Encourage her to ask questions and share her own thoughts.

## Learn to recognize the stages of scribbling

What's your child doing when he scribbles? He's learning! Every time he picks up a crayon or pencil, he's strengthening his writing skills.

In fact, he learns a bit more as he passes through each stage of scribbling. These stages include:

- **Random scribbling.** This is scribbling for fun. It may include shapes and lines.
- **Scribbling with understanding.** In this stage, your child may “get” that written words have meaning. (Even if his scribbles aren't real words.)
- **Creating messages.** Here, your child is writing with a purpose. His scribbles might include real letters. But the messages themselves may not make sense.

**Source:** “Supporting Early Literacy: The Preschool Years,” Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, [www.nwrel.org/cfc/publications/pdf/preschool.pdf](http://www.nwrel.org/cfc/publications/pdf/preschool.pdf).

## Make a ritual of reading to your child at bedtime

One of the most important things about reading aloud to your child is that it be a regular process. It should be something your child can count on as part of her daily routine.

Of course, you can read aloud to your child any time of day. But reading before bed can offer your child a sense of security and should be a regular routine for your family.

To get the most out of your bedtime reading ritual, make sure to:

- **Read familiar books.**
- **Start at the same time each night.**



Ryan McVay/Getty Images

- **Snuggle up** in the same spot—and with the same stuffed animals.

**Source:** Mem Fox, *Reading Magic: Why Reading Aloud to Our Children Will Change Their Lives Forever*, ISBN: 0-15-601076-3 (Harcourt, Inc., 1-800-543-1918, [www.harcourt.com](http://www.harcourt.com)).



**Q:** My child's preschool teacher reads aloud to the class often. But it doesn't seem like he ever “teaches” them to read. Is that okay?

**A:** Yes. Hearing stories is an important part of preschoolers' language learning. Each time your child's teacher reads aloud, he's building readers. How? By exposing the youngsters to new words and story structures, and by getting them to love books.

Do you have a question about reading? Email [readingadvisor@parent-institute.com](mailto:readingadvisor@parent-institute.com).



## Books to delight your early reader

**Thank You, Amelia Bedelia**, by Peggy Parish and Barbara Siebel Thomas (HarperTrophy). What has the mixed-up maid done now? Lots of crazy things! But she made Great-Aunt Myra smile, too, and that's not easy!

**Spider-Man Versus Doc Ock**, by Acton Figueroa (HarperFestival). Oh, no! Spidey's got to save the city from an eight-armed bad guy. Can the webbed wonder do it? Sure he can—he's Spider-Man!

## Point out everyday sight words to your child



Sight words—those common words that young readers learn to recognize “on sight”—are an important part of reading.

Luckily, there are plenty of fun, easy ways to expose your child to common sight words. (Without drilling her!)

Here are just a few:

- **Write your child's name** and show her what it looks like. She may soon learn to recognize its individual letters and their sounds.
- **Don't skip over “The End.”** When reading with your child, point to these simple words that conclude many books.
- **Point out everyday sight words.** Show your child “Love” at the close of greeting cards. Read the colors' names on her crayons.

**Source:** Robin Campbell, editor, *Facilitating Preschool Literacy*, ISBN: 0-87207-187-1 (International Reading Association, 1-800-336-7323, [www.reading.org](http://www.reading.org)).

### Building Readers®

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