

# BUILDING READERS®

How Families Can Help Children Get Ready to Read

Parent Information & Resource Center  
416 Black Avenue, Lexington, S.C. 29072

## Connect with your child's teacher to monitor reading progress and goals

Your child will learn important reading readiness skills during preschool. Wouldn't you like to know more about them?

To keep tabs on your child's progress, check in with her teacher every few weeks. When you do, ask:

- **What is my child** working on right now to become reading ready?
- **How can I reinforce these skills** at home?
- **What skills** will the class tackle next?
- **Has my child's** language learning improved?
- **What reading skills** should she be working toward mastering?

Pay attention to the worksheets and drawings your child brings home from preschool. Look for signs of progress, such as her writing (even if it's scribbling) getting sharper.

**Source:** K. Stanberry, "Understanding Beginning Reading Development in Preschoolers," Get Ready to Read! [niswc.com/questions\\_reading\\_readiness](http://niswc.com/questions_reading_readiness).



*"Until I feared I would lose it, I never loved to read.  
One does not love breathing."*

—To Kill a Mockingbird by Harper Lee

## Puppet play leads to language learning

You can use puppets to boost your preschooler's storytelling skills. When your child tells stories with puppets, remind him to include a beginning, middle and end of his story. This will help him begin to understand the structure of a story—and he'll be using his imagination! Together, you can:

- **Make simple puppets** out of old socks or pieces of cloth. Encourage your child to decorate them using markers or felt. You can also use buttons and yarn.
- **Decide on a favorite story** to act out. Let him narrate the tale as you both use the puppets to act out the scenes. Don't feel like you have to stick to the script—if your child wants to add a new character or create a different ending, no problem!

## All kinds of new experiences prepare your child to read

Engaging in creative activities builds skills your child will need for reading. Encourage him to play make-believe, to explore and learn, and to be creative. Give him old clothes to play dress up. Sing with him, tell him stories and answer all of his questions. All of these activities boost the language and creative skills necessary to read.



**Source:** T. Armstrong, "Early Childhood Education: Play," The Best Schools, ASCD, [niswc.com/childhood\\_play](http://niswc.com/childhood_play).

## Pay a visit to the library

Heading to your local library with your child for the first time? Ask the librarian for a tour—and for book suggestions! It's an excellent way for you and your child to discover what riches the library has to offer.



**Source:** "Visit Your Local Library!" ¡Colorín Colorado! [niswc.com/library\\_visit](http://niswc.com/library_visit).

## Reading promotes word smarts

Reading aloud doesn't just build your child's vocabulary. It also teaches her that words can have more than one meaning.

For instance, you may read "the puppy likes to bark" on one page, and then come across a bird "pecking at the tree's bark" several pages later.

Point out that your child now knows two different meanings for the same word!



**Source:** R. Campbell, *Facilitating Preschool Literacy*, International Reading Association.

## Engage in frequent discussions with your child



The more kids talk and use language, the easier it is for them to learn to read. Open-ended questions (those that can't be answered with one word) are especially helpful for starting conversations. For example, while you read with your child, stop and ask, "What do you think will happen next?" Here are some other ideas:

- **Narrate your day.** Let your child hear you reflect on your activities. While working a puzzle together, for example, you might say, "I'm looking for pieces with straight edges. Can you help me find a piece without any bumps?"
- **Give descriptions.** Mention what your child is doing: "That's a bright sun you're coloring." This helps her connect words to real things. It may also spark discussion now or later.
- **Affirm what your child says.** "Yes, it is getting cooler outside!" She'll see that what she has said is correct and relevant. Then she'll want to say more!

## Practice patterns, matching and memory skills

Learning to read involves more than just learning letters and sounds. Your child develops useful reading skills when he:

- **Makes patterns.** Make a pattern by placing a red block, then a blue one, then red, etc., on the table. Ask your child to copy it. Add more colors as he improves.
- **Uses memory.** Put four items on a tray. Let your child look for about a minute, then take the tray away. See how many of the items he can remember.
- **Makes matches.** Draw three people. Make them all the same—but put a hat on one. See if your child can pick out



what is different. If this is too easy for him, try a more subtle difference, like an extra button on one person's shirt.

**Source:** J. Willis, M.D., M.Ed., "Play Brain Games to Help Your Child Learn to Read," Parent Toolkit, NBC News Education Nation, [nswc.com/cognitive\\_skills\\_reading](http://nswc.com/cognitive_skills_reading).



**Q:** My child falls asleep within a moment after I crack open his first bedtime story. Should I skip nighttime reading altogether?

**A:** Not at all. Sharing stories is a wonderful ritual to have any time of the day, so keep it up—you're building happy memories with books! If bedtime isn't the best time to read for a while, read together during the day, too, when he's more alert.

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

## Reading aloud develops your child's mind—and body

Don't sit still when you read to your child—get involved! Point to the pictures that show what you are reading about. Mimic the action that is taking place. If the story mentions someone's toes, tickle your child's toes. Have your child move with you as you read together. It's a good way to develop her motor skills.



## Books to delight your early reader

- ***Sally Goes to the Mountains*** by Stephen Huneck (Abrams Books for Young Readers). Sally, a dog, goes with her owner on a trip to the mountains. There she meets many animals with whom she wants to play.
- ***The Littlest Dinosaur*** by Michael Foreman (Walker & Company). A tiny dinosaur is born into a family where his size isn't appreciated. That is, until the tiny dinosaur's family is stuck in the mud and they need his help to get out.
- ***Chalk*** by Bill Thomson (Marshall Cavendish Children's Books). When three children find a bag of magical chalk, they start to draw intricate pictures—that suddenly all come to life!



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