

Helping Children Learn[®]

Tips Families Can Use to Help Children Do Better in School



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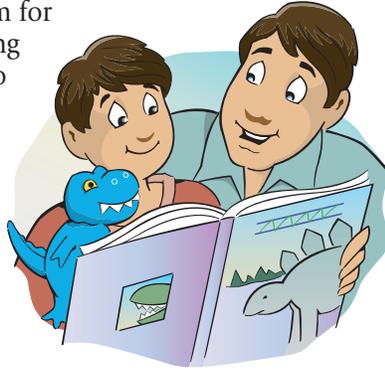
Parent Information & Resource Center

416 Black Avenue, Lexington, S.C. 29072

Encourage your child to get involved during read-aloud time

Reading aloud with your child prepares him for school success in many ways—from teaching him how books and printed letters work, to opening his mind to new words and ideas. That's why one of the best things you can do for your child is to establish a daily reading habit.

Your child benefits more from reading aloud when you actively involve him in the process. When you read together:



- **Look at the book.** Take a moment before you start reading to talk with your child about the book's cover. Can he get some ideas from the picture about what the book is about? Who is the author? Who is the illustrator?
- **Read a few pages and then pause.** Ask your child a question or two. For example, "What do you think will happen next in this story?" Making predictions helps your child understand what he reads.
- **Use expressive voices** to maintain your child's interest. Ask questions like, "What do you think this dinosaur sounds like? Can you make your voice sound like his voice? What would the dinosaur in the book say to your toy dinosaur?"
- **Encourage your child to look for words** he knows by sight. Have him point to the ones he recognizes and let him read them out loud.

Source: "Make the Most of Reading Aloud," ReadWriteThink, International Literacy Association, nismc.com/read_aloud.



Keep your child learning all summer

Whether your child will be heading to kindergarten or preschool in the fall, she'll be ready if she spends the summer engaged in learning fun. Here are some simple activities that will keep your child motivated to learn:

- **Practice personal facts.** Does your child know your phone number and address? If not, think up a rhyme or a silly story to help her memorize them. Be sure to tell her not to share personal information with strangers!
- **Go on a shape search.** With your child, look for objects shaped like circles, squares and triangles. If these are too easy, try octagons or pentagons.
- **Create a scrapbook.** Help your child add some photos or draw pictures of her summer experiences. Then have her "write" about them underneath.
- **Shop for knowledge.** When you go to the store with your child, let her help you find things you need. You can also point to a word on a label and read it aloud. Then ask your child to point to the word and repeat it.

Practice directions, one step at a time

When your child gets to kindergarten, he will need to listen to the teacher and follow directions. To practice at home:

- **Start with one-step directions.** "Hang your jacket on the hook."
- **Move on to two-step directions.** "Bring me your backpack and then hang your jacket on the hook."

When he masters this, try three steps or more.

Exercise can be educational

Making sure your child has a strong and healthy body is a vital part of helping her learn. Strong muscles, bones and joints are the "drivers" of your preschooler's motor skills.



Get moving every day this summer. Give your child opportunities to:

- **Run, walk and skip.**
- **Ride a scooter,** tricycle or bike.
- **Kick a soccer ball** outside, or play other sports.
- **Play active games** with friends, such as hopscotch, or have balancing contests.

Build a foundation for writing success

Help your preschooler work on the building blocks that will support his writing skills. These include:



- **Vocabulary.** Use new words repeatedly in ways that make them easy to understand. "This tastes so yummy. It's *luscious*."
- **Small motor skills.** Have your child draw, paint and write his name.
- **Spelling.** Talk about letter patterns, such as the sounds that letter combinations like *oo* and *ch* make.

Source: J.S. Schumm, Ph.D. and G.E. Schumm, Jr., *The Reading Tutor's Handbook*, Free Spirit Publishing.



How can I help my child learn to share attention?

Q: The teacher says my four-year-old gets upset when other children receive attention. At home, she has to share attention only with her older brother, and it's not usually a problem. What can I do to prepare my daughter to share attention with a classroom full of kindergartners?



A: Your child may think that her teacher likes the children she is paying attention to at any given moment more than she likes others in the class. Of course this isn't true, but it is a hard concept for young children to grasp.

To help your child understand about sharing attention:

- **Take turns speaking and listening** at home. Pass a toy around— whoever has it may speak. When it isn't your daughter's turn, say, "I know it's hard to wait, but your brother's words matter to me. When it's your turn, I will pay attention to you, because your words are important, too."
- **Attend group events**, such as story hour at the library. Point out to your child that the librarian is reading to everyone. Later, people will get a chance to ask questions, and the librarian will respond to each in turn.
- **Visit a family-friendly restaurant** with your child. Show her how the server has to take care of many tables. She cares about each table, but can't take care of all of them at once. Each person at the restaurant must wait his turn for attention.



Are you providing new ways to learn?

Preschoolers like revisiting familiar places and activities. But one of the ways they learn about the world is by having new experiences. Are you exposing your child to new learning adventures? Answer *yes* or *no* below:

- ___ **1. Do you try** new things as a family, such as interesting foods and sports?
- ___ **2. Do you visit** new places with your child, such as museums and parks?
- ___ **3. Do you go** to the library often so your child can check out new books?
- ___ **4. Do you plan** opportunities for your child to meet new people and play with new friends?
- ___ **5. Do you ask** your child to participate in new activities,

such as gardening, baking or finger painting?

How well are you doing?

More yes answers mean you're doing a great job of teaching your child about the world around him. For each no, try that idea.

"For a small child there is no division between playing and learning ..."

—Penelope Leach

Respect is a great feeling

One way to inspire your child to behave with respect is to talk about feelings—her own and those of others. For example, you might say, "That little boy is crying. Why do you think he's upset?"

Point out to your child how good it feels to be asked politely, thanked, and treated nicely. Research suggests that using a warm tone when talking with kids about other people's emotions can increase cooperation.

Talking with your preschooler about feelings now can help her for many years to come. Positive social skills will help her get along with classmates and teachers.

Source: J. Drummond and others, "Here, there and everywhere: emotion and mental state talk in different social contexts predicts empathic helping in toddlers," *Frontiers in Psychology*, niswc.com/feelings.

Stick to helpful routines

Summer often brings changes to families' schedules. But the more you can maintain your preschooler's routines, the better prepared he'll be for school in the fall. Try to:

- **Start mornings on the right foot.** Everything your child does on school mornings—dressing, brushing teeth, combing hair, eating a healthy breakfast—should stay the same all summer.
- **Enforce a consistent bedtime.**
- **Limit recreational electronics use.** More free time should not mean more screen time.

Show your child you care

Your child needs love, acceptance and respect from those around him to develop a positive sense of self.

One way to show these is to value his interests. You don't always have to join in. Often,



saying something like "I noticed you really like to learn about cars and trucks," is enough to make your child feel understood.

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