

Supporting Your Beginning Reader



Beyond the classroom

Learning how to read and write isn't just for the classroom. Parents and caregivers play an important role in supporting beginning readers.

You can provide many opportunities for your child to read, write, speak, and listen that will support his or her classroom learning.

Any activity that spurs your child's imagination can become a great opportunity for literacy learning. Family discussions, trips to museums and historic sites, word games, and collaborative family projects such as family scrapbooking or storytelling are all great ways to supplement your child's growing literacy skills.

Reading aloud

Reading aloud together is another great way to build literacy. It provides an intimate, loving, and safe way for your child to practice his or her developing literacy skills. If you already have a time set aside for reading together each day, keep it up!

Here are some ideas to keep in mind:

- Read aloud to your child every day, and continue after your child learns to read.
- Answer your child's questions, even if they interrupt the story.
- Talk as you read. Ask questions like "What do you think is going to happen next?" "Why did that character do that?" and "What would you do?"
- Don't use books that are not interesting to your child.

- Encourage your child to write after reading. For example, ask your child to describe his or her favorite part or to imagine a different ending for the book.
- Have your child retell the story in his or her own words.
- After finishing the book, talk with your child about what you read, and invite him or her to reread parts of the story with you.

Same old stories

Sometimes parents get frustrated when children want to read the same stories over and over again. However, this is a normal and important step in your child's literacy journey. Hearing a story many times helps children memorize the words and hastens the day when they will be able to read on their own.

Here are some other tips for encouraging your child's early interest in reading:

- Learning to read is challenging! Encourage all of your child's efforts and praise his or her accomplishments.
- Explore the sounds that letters make. Ask questions like "What sounds do you hear in the word *library*?" and "What letter starts the word *green*?"
- When your child gets stuck on a word, resist the urge to provide the answer immediately. Instead, encourage your child to look at the picture to get clues or to read the rest of the sentence and then try to fill in a word that makes sense.
- Cheer your child on as he or she attempts to read new words and unfamiliar stories. Each word your child reads is one step further on the journey of literacy.



Venturing into new territories

“Choosing the correct book matters a lot,” says Dr. Lesley Morrow of Rutgers University and a past president of the International Reading Association. Here are some suggestions for selecting good books for your preschooler:

- Get books that rhyme and books with clear, attractive illustrations and strong texts.
- Pick books on subjects your child is interested in. If he or she takes a trip to an aquarium, borrow a book on sharks or dolphins.
- Ask other parents, friends, and teachers to share favorite book titles with you.

- Check online for lists of award-winning books for children. The International Reading Association website (www.reading.org) features Children’s Choices, a downloadable annual list of books chosen by young readers.

- Explore different genres with your child: storybooks, picture books, informational books, fairy tales, poetry, magazines, diaries, newspapers, and more.



Libraries and beyond

- The best place to journey through the world of words is your local library. Take advantage of your library’s reading programs, parent–child book groups, story hours, and resource materials.
- Get your child a library card at the earliest opportunity. This gives your child a feeling of ownership and responsibility. Help your child find books on subjects of interest.
- Never force a book, recommends Dr. Deborah Wooten of the University of Tennessee. Instead, give your child a choice among several books, especially titles that a quick check of the bookshelves may have missed.
- In addition to using your library, check book sales, yard sales, thrift stores, and bookstores for stories to add to your family’s collection. Children love having their own books. Give books as gifts for birthdays, holidays, rewards, and special occasions.



Finding more resources

Guiding a new reader doesn’t need to be overwhelming. The Web offers some great resources to help your child’s literacy learning. Check out the International Reading Association’s website at www.reading.org, or visit these links:

- ReadWriteThink.org
“Learning Beyond the Classroom”:
www.readwritethink.org/beyondtheclassroom/
- [Reading Is Fundamental](http://ReadingIsFundamental.org): www.rif.org/parents/
- [Reading Rockets](http://ReadingRockets.org): www.readingrockets.org

Teachers, school administrators, and children’s librarians are also terrific sources of advice.

Supporting Your Beginning Reader is one in a series of brochures produced in response to questions that parents frequently ask about their children’s reading instruction. Single copies may be downloaded free at the Association’s website, www.reading.org. Bulk copies may be purchased online or by telephone at 302-731-1600.

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- Enhance the professional development of reading educators worldwide
- Advocate for research, policy, and practices that support the best interests of all learners and reading professionals
- Establish and strengthen national and international alliances with a wide range of organizations
- Encourage and support research to promote informed decision making about reading practice and policy
- Provide leadership on literacy issues around the world

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