

How Do I Introduce My Young Child to Reading?

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Why read to a child who doesn't understand language or sing to a toddler who can't sing along? These activities help children make early connections between words and meaning. When parents read and sing to young children, they create a safe, warm environment for children to appreciate the love and value of learning. Children enjoy any activities that bring them closer to the caring adults in their lives. Reading doesn't begin with memorizing letters and sounding out words. Adults help lay the foundation for reading in a child's early years by pointing at and naming objects while dressing an infant, naming foods while shopping with a toddler, or cooking with a preschooler. Engaging in conversation, reading, singing, and playing games with young children are important building blocks for learning to read.

Here are some suggestions for parents who want to help their young child become a successful reader.

Infants

- Talk or sing to your baby when changing diapers, bathing, or engaging in play.
- Introduce cloth books with bright pictures for baby to look at.
- Point to words on signs at the zoo, park, or while walking or driving. Read the words aloud to baby.



Toddlers

- When your child begins to notice letters, name the letters for him/her. Read the words and explain what they mean.
- Read short stories before bed. Ask questions about the characters, setting, etc.
- Let toddlers "write" shopping lists with you.
- Give your child magnetic letters for the refrigerator, and teach him/her how to spell his/her name.



Preschoolers



- Allow preschoolers to help prepare recipes with simple steps.
- Ask questions to preschoolers and kindergarteners about the print they see in books. Help children connect words to the pictures.
- Choose books with lots of pictures. Simple concept books that teach colors and shapes are fun.
- Play picture card games.
- Provide materials for the child to “write” a story about him/herself.
- Continue to read bedtime stories, even if your child has learned to read.
- Listen to the stories your child makes up, as well as their jokes and riddles.
- Play simple word games like Scrabble Jr. or Boggle Jr.
- Choose books with repetition so the child may anticipate what will be read.
- Let your child see you reading for pleasure. Imitation is a powerful teacher.

Resources

National Association for the Education of Young Children- 1998. *Raising a Reader, Raising a Writer: How Parents Can Help.* Washington, DC

The Importance of Reading to Your Child for Early Literacy.
http://ma.essortment.com/earlyliteracyp_rxjf.htm