

Parent Brochure

How Can I Encourage My Young Child To Read?

"The majority of reading problems faced by today's adolescents and adults could have been avoided or resolved in the early years of childhood."

--National Research Council (1998)

As a parent of a young child, you are probably more concerned about your child's progress in reading than in any other subject taught in school. To achieve in math, science, English, history, geography, or any other subject, your child must have reading skills that are developed to the point that most of them are automatic. He can't be struggling to recognize words in a school textbook when he is trying to read quickly to grasp the meaning of the text. In other words, children must learn to read before they can read to learn.

This brochure offers suggestions for ways you can encourage and help your young child with the reading process and lists organizations and resources that can help parents and communities support children as they learn to read.

Why Should Parents Encourage Children To Read?

Many parents recognize the value and enjoyment of reading to their young children but perhaps are not clear about how they can help their children become better readers. Because reading is so important to children's success in school, parents can and should help their children become interested in reading and encourage growth in their reading skills. "Learning to read is a lengthy and difficult process for many children, and success in learning to read is based in large part on developing language and literacy-related skills very early in life" (Lyon, 1997). Young children develop a more positive attitude toward reading if they experience warm and close contact with their parents while reading.

What Are Some Ways To Encourage Young Readers?

The most important thing to remember is that reading should be an enjoyable experience. The following activities can help you stimulate your child's interest in reading.

Talk with your infant or young child before he learns to read. Talking with your child before he even speaks will help him learn important language skills. Most children need strong oral language skills if they are to develop as readers and writers. Using short, simple sentences, you can talk about your daily activities, what he is seeing and doing, his environment, sizes of objects, the shapes of signs, and so forth.

Read to and with your child at least 30 minutes each day. Your child will gain awareness of the conventions of reading (left to right, top to bottom), and even the very young will gain vocabulary. Running your index finger under the print as you read will help your child notice

that printed words have meaning. Gradually you can ask her to identify letters and sounds.

Sing songs and recite poems and rhymes that have repetitive sounds. Repetition makes it easier for your child to pick up on the patterns in the sounds you make.

Make sure your child's day care provider, nursery school teacher, or preschool teacher reads aloud daily and offers books for your child to look at.

Model good reading habits. Help your child understand that reading is important by letting him see you reading maps, books, recipes, and directions. Suggest reading as a free-time activity. Keep books that are of interest to your child in an easy place for him to reach.

Visit your local library. While you're there you can sign your child up for preschool story time and let her choose some books to take home.

What Are Some Ways To Encourage School-Age Readers?

Once your child begins nursery school, preschool, or elementary school, you should work with her teacher to improve her reading skills. Many teachers are now sending home practical ideas for parents to use with their school-age children to help them develop skills and to encourage good reading habits. Ask your child's teacher for these practice activities. By reinforcing the skills your child's teacher emphasizes, you will be supplementing what he has learned about reading throughout the school day. Additional ways to encourage your school-age child to read are listed below.

Continue being a good role model. Let your child see you read.

Encourage your child to read on her own at home. Reading at home can help your child do better in school.

Keep a variety of reading materials in the house. Make sure to have reading materials for enjoyment as well as for reference.

Encourage your child to practice reading aloud. Frequently listen to your child read out loud and praise her often as she does so. Offer to read every other page or even every other chapter to your child. Have conversations and discussions about the book with your child.

Write short notes for your child to read. Write down his weekly household responsibilities for him to keep track of or put a note in his lunch bag.

Encourage activities that require reading. Cooking (reading a recipe), constructing a kite (reading directions), or identifying a bird's nest or a shell at the beach (reading a reference book) are some examples.

Establish a reading time, even if it's only 10 minutes each day. Make sure there is a good reading light in your child's room and stock her bookshelves with books and magazines that are easy to both read and reach.

Talk with your child. Talking makes children think about their experiences more and helps them expand their vocabularies. Ask your child to give detailed descriptions of events and to tell complete stories.

Give your child writing materials. Reading and writing go hand in hand. Children want to learn to write and to practice writing. If you make pencils, crayons, and paper available at all times, your child will be more inclined to initiate writing activities on his own.

Restrict television time. The less time your child spends watching television, the more time he will have for reading-related activities.

Visit the library once a week. Have your child apply for her own library card so she can check out books on her own for schoolwork and for pleasure reading. Ask your child to bring home a library book to read to a younger sibling and encourage her to check out books on tape that she can listen to on long car trips.

Work in partnership with your child's school. The more you know about the type of reading program his school follows, the more you can help by supplementing the program at home. Offer to volunteer in the classroom or school library as often as your schedule allows. Ask the school for parent participation materials.

Conclusion

To help your child succeed in school, you should do your part to ensure that he or she starts school with a strong foundation in language and literacy-related skills and a desire to learn to read. In the early elementary years--from first through third grades--your child will continue learning how to read, which is a complex process that is difficult for some and easy for others. Take care during these years not to overemphasize the process of learning to read while encouraging your child to practice reading often. Reading for pleasure and interest will help your child to develop reading skills and will give your child the opportunity to practice these skills in meaningful ways.

Where Can I Get More Information?

The following organizations offer more information about early reading:

America Reads Challenge
U.S. Department of Education
600 Independence Avenue, Room 6100
Washington, DC 20202
Toll Free: 1-800-USA-LEARN (872-5327)
Toll Free TDD: 1-800-437-0833
Phone: 202-401-8888
Web: <http://www.ed.gov/inits/americanreads/>

American Library Association
Association for Library Service to Children
50 East Huron
Chicago, IL 60611
Toll Free: 1-800-545-2433
TDD: 312-944-7298
E-mail: ala@ala.org
Web: <http://www.ala.org/alsc>

ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading, English, and Communication
Indiana University
Smith Research Center
2805 East 10th Street, Suite 150
Bloomington, IN 47408-2698
Toll Free: 1-800-759-4723
Phone: 812-855-5847
E-mail: ericcs@indiana.edu
Web: http://www.indiana.edu/~eric_rec

International Reading Association
Public Information Office
800 Barksdale Road
P.O. Box 8139
Newark, DE 19714-8139
Phone: 302-731-1057
E-mail: marketing@reading.org
Web: <http://www.ira.org/>

Reading Is Fundamental (RIF)
Department WB
P.O. Box 23444
Washington, DC 20026
Phone: 202-287-3220
Web: <http://www.si.edu/rif/>

Sources

References identified with ED are documents abstracted in the ERIC database. They are available in microfiche collections at more than 900 locations or in paper copy and, in some cases, electronically from the ERIC Document Reproduction Service at 1-800-443-ERIC (3742). Call 1-800-LET-ERIC (538-3742) for more details.

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Behm, M., and R. Behm. 1995. *Let's Read! 101 Ideas To Help Your Child Learn To Read and Write*. Bilingual Edition. Revised Edition. Bloomington, IN: ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading, English, and Communication. ED 370 081.

Lyon, G. R. 1997. Statement of G. Reid Lyon, Ph.D., Acting Chief, Child Development and Behavior Branch, National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, National Institutes of Health, before the Committee on Education and the Workforce, U.S. House of Representatives. Washington, DC, Thursday, July 10, 1997. [<http://www.apa.org/ppo/lyon.html>]

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U.S. Department of Education. 1997. "Ready*Set*Read for Families: Early Childhood Language Activities for Children From Birth Through Age Five." *America Reads Challenge*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education. [<http://www.ed.gov/Family/RSRforFamily/>]

U.S. Department of Education. 1997. "Simple Things You Can Do To Help All Children Read Well and Independently by the End of the Third Grade." *America Reads Challenge: Read*Write*Now!* Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education. [<http://www.ed.gov/pubs/SimpleThings/>]

You can call ACCESS ERIC at 1-800-LET-ERIC (538-3742) for additional free printed copies of this brochure while supplies last.

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