

# Building Readers®

How Families Can Help Children Become Better Readers

ChildCareGroup  
WorkSource for Dallas County

## Early writing is a part of reading!

Don't be confused if your preschooler's teacher mentions "emergent writing." It just refers to children's early efforts at writing in a meaningful way. And it's also a crucial part of your child's language learning.

What do emergent-writing skills look like? Examples include:

- **Scribbling** with a pencil or crayon.
- **Drawing.**
- **Copying words** or pictures.
- **Inventing spelling** for words.
- **Printing a name** (even if it's spelled incorrectly).
- **Composing messages** (whether they contain actual words or not).

Be sure to encourage—not criticize—your child's early writing efforts. Each time he picks up a pencil, he's taking another step along the road to reading!

**Source:** "Early Literacy Information," Get Ready to Read! [www.getreadytoread.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=59&Itemid=59#emergent](http://www.getreadytoread.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=59&Itemid=59#emergent).



iStockphoto

### Use an art activity to teach the alphabet

Teach your youngster the ABCs by making a rainbow paper chain. Here's what you'll need:

- **Five sheets** of construction paper (choose different colors).
- **Glue** or a stapler.
- **Markers.**

To help your child assemble an alphabet chain:

1. **Cut each sheet** of paper into six equal strips.
2. **Write one letter** of the alphabet on each strip. As you do, name the letter and mention the sound it makes.
3. **Fasten the ends** of the "A" strip together to make a loop. Weave the "B" strip through the "A" loop and fasten its ends. Repeat this for each letter.
4. **Hang the completed** masterpiece in her bedroom.

**Source:** *10 Minutes a Day to Reading Success*, ISBN: 0-395-90152-9 (Houghton Mifflin Company, 617-351-5000, [www.hmco.com](http://www.hmco.com)).

### Break up compound words



Hearing and saying the parts of words can help your child get ready to read. Make a list of compound words (words that have two parts) like *sunshine*, *moonbeam*, *baseball*, etc. Pick one word. Then ask your child this question: "The big word is *baseball*. If I say *base*, what is missing?"

**Source:** "Now You Hear It, Now You Don't: Beginning to Read," KidSource OnLine, [www.kidsource.com/kidsource/content3/Read\\_Write\\_Now/begin.html](http://www.kidsource.com/kidsource/content3/Read_Write_Now/begin.html).

### Track literacy milestones



Just what are the meaningful literacy milestones for preschoolers? Click on [www.ed.gov/pubs/CheckFamilies/3-4.html](http://www.ed.gov/pubs/CheckFamilies/3-4.html) to find out. The information, courtesy of the U.S. Department of Education, is simple, useful and free!

### Attendance matters—but so does your child's health!



It's vital for your budding reader to have good preschool attendance, but it's equally critical to know when to keep her home.

Your child may be too sick for school if she:

- **Has a fever.**
- **Is vomiting** or has diarrhea.
- **Has an unexplained rash.**

Go ahead and share books with your child on these "feeling yucky" days, but do it from home!

**Source:** Dan Childs, "How Sick Is Too Sick for School?" ABCNews.com, <http://abcnews.go.com/Health/story?id=2893860&page=1>.

## A playful addition to family-reading night

Make family-reading night extra fun—play a few rounds of this kid-friendly word-recognition game! You'll need index cards, markers or pens, old magazines, newspapers or photos, scissors and glue. To play the game:

1. **Clip pictures** of simple objects (like trees, dogs and cats) from old magazines. You can also draw pictures.
2. **Divide the index cards** into two stacks. Glue a picture onto each card in one stack.
3. **Write the names** of the objects shown in the pictures on the cards in the other stack.
4. **Lay the cards** faceup on a table. See if your child can match the pictures to the words.

**Source:** "Word Recognition," Family Education, <http://fun.familyeducation.com/reading/activity/36705.html?detoured=1>.

## Your attitude toward school impacts your child's

Your little one will be a "big kid" before you know it. So start teaching her good school-related habits now—it may increase her academic success later.

To put your youngster on the path to school success:

- **Communicate regularly with her teacher.** Let your child see that you're interested in what happens in class.
- **Follow instructions.** If the teacher asks you to send in a specific item for show-and-tell, do it. If following instructions is important to you, odds are it'll be important to your child, too.



istockphoto

- **Get her to preschool on time.** It'll show her that promptness—and attendance—matter.

**Source:** Suzanne McDonough, "School Habits Start in Preschool," Suite 101, [http://earlychildhood.suite101.com/article.cfm/school\\_habits\\_start\\_in\\_preschool](http://earlychildhood.suite101.com/article.cfm/school_habits_start_in_preschool).



## Books to delight your early reader

**Animal Babies**, by Bobbie Hamsa (Children's Press). "A baby cat is a kitten. A baby dog is a pup ... ." Find out what other young animals are called in this sweet, simple story for the tiniest bookworms.

**Bear with Me**, by Ann Rhiannon (Random House). What happens when young Kenai gets turned into a bear? He must learn to escape traps, catch fish and start acting like a bear, that's what!

**The Snowy Day**, by Ezra Jack Keats (Viking). Snow comes to Peter's town. He plays all day, then decides to put a few snowballs in his pocket for tomorrow. But when he wakes up, they're gone! Will the snow outside be gone, too?

## Want to boost fluency? Have your child listen up!



Sharing stories with your child doesn't just boost his listening skills. It'll also boost his reading skills. Research shows that listening to a fluent reader can help youngsters become more fluent readers, too.

So whether you do most of the reading yourself, or you rely on audio books (another fine option), keep sharing stories together. It really does matter!

**Source:** Linda K. Rath, Ed.D. and Louise Kennedy, *The Between the Lions Book for Parents*, ISBN: 0-0605-1027-7 (HarperResource, 212-207-7000, [www.harpercollins.com](http://www.harpercollins.com)).

**"Wear the old coat and buy the new book."**

—Austin Phelps



**Q:** My preschooler's teacher needs parent volunteers, but I work full time. How can I pitch in?

**A:** Find ways to help outside of school. Maybe it's by cutting strips of paper at home so students can make bookmarks in class. Or you could arrange now to chaperone next month's after-school trip to the library. Remember: There's more than one way to volunteer.

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

**Building Readers®**  
*How Families Can Help Children Become Better Readers*  
 Publisher: John H. Wherry, Ed.D.  
 Managing Editor: Pat Hodgdon.  
 Editor: Jennifer McGovern. Writer: Holly Smith.  
 Copyright © 2008, The Parent Institute® (a division of NIS, Inc.)  
 P.O. Box 7474, Fairfax Station, VA 22039-7474  
 1-800-756-5525, ISSN: 1533-3299  
[www.parent-institute.com](http://www.parent-institute.com)