

Building Readers®

How Families Can Help Children Become Better Readers

ChildCareGroup
WorkSource for Dallas County

Use magazines and catalogs to teach letter recognition

Most families have piles of old magazines and catalogs around their homes. If you have a stash you're not sure what to do with, start using them to teach your child how to recognize letters and sounds. Here are two ways to get started:

1. Take a "sound shopping trip" with your child. Choose a catalog or magazine. Take turns pointing to things you and your child would like to buy. Name the item and the letter it starts with, then have your child repeat it.

2. Make an "alphabet animal collage." Print a letter on a piece of colored construction paper. Ask your child to read the letter. Look through your old magazines and catalogs to find pictures of animals whose names start with the letter you wrote. Help him cut out the pictures and make an alphabet animal collage!

Sources: "The Sound Shopping Trip," *Beginning to Read*, www.kidsource.com/kidsource/content3/Read_Write_Now/begin.html; "Alphabet Animal Collage," *Kinderart Littles*, www.kinderart.com/littles/alphan.shtml.



Monika Adamczyk, iStockphoto

Sharing stories should be fun



If you make story time the bright spot in your child's day, she'll be more excited about reading. Here's how:

- **Get cozy.** Snuggle up together while you share stories.
- **Choose the right time.** Read when your child is calm and relaxed. Don't force her to sit when she's antsy!
- **Be flexible.** Today's story time could last 30 minutes. Tomorrow's might end after five. Just go with the flow.

Make sure you have the tools to promote reading



Is your home full of books, magazines and newspapers? Are there boxes of crayons and pads of paper where your child can reach them? If so, pat yourself on the back! Just by having these things around, you're building a reader.

Nurture the parent-teacher relationship

Are you and your preschooler's teacher on the same team? You should be! After all, teachers play a big role when it comes to children's language learning (and every other kind of learning).

To keep your parent-teacher relationship strong:

- **Stay informed.** The more you know about your child's preschool, the better. So don't be afraid to ask questions about the school day.
- **Communicate.** If you're concerned about something at preschool, speak up. Your child's teacher is there to help.
- **Get involved.** Volunteer to read aloud during story time. Attend school meetings and special events. Your efforts really do matter.

Source: "Working with Teachers and Schools—Helping Your Child Succeed in School," U.S. Department of Education, www.ed.gov/parents/academic/help/succeed/part8.html.

Talk frequently to your child



The more words your child hears, the more words he will learn. One of the most important things you can do is talk to your child and listen to him speak.

If you speak two languages, talk to him in the one you speak the best. Young children who hear two languages spoken can learn them both.

Source: "Learning Two Languages: Questions Parents Ask," PBS Parents Guide to ... Reading and Language, www.pbs.org/parents/readinglanguage/articles/multifamilies/talking.html.

What does 'school refusal' look like?

All kids complain of tummy aches sometimes. But does your youngster always have a reason for missing preschool? Then there could be something else going on. It might be a case of school refusal.

School refusal—where a child insists on staying home—is most common in kids ages 5–6 and 10–11. Still, it can happen at any age. Symptoms include:

- **Separation anxiety.**
- **Tantrums.**
- **Stomachaches or headaches.**
- **Defiance.**

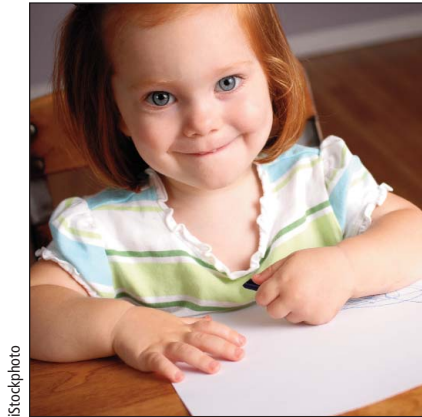
If this sounds like your little one, talk to his teacher or doctor about what to do. Preschool is too important to be missed over and over again.

Source: "Anxiety Disorders in Children and Adolescents," Anxiety Disorders Association of America, www.adaa.org/GettingHelp/FocusOn/children&Adolescents/sra.asp.

Language learning is a drawing away

It's important that children learn the connection between the written word and illustrations. Build your child's language skills by having her draw a story. Here's how:

1. **Give her paper** and some crayons.
2. **Ask her to invent a story** in her head and then illustrate it on the paper.
3. **Have her tell you her tale** out loud when she has finished.
4. **Write the words for her** underneath each picture. Presto! She just created her own "written" story!



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Source: "Preschool Literacy Activity—Draw Me a Story," PreschoolRock.com, http://education.preschoolrock.com/index.php/language_and_reading/preschool-literacy-activity---draw-me-a-story.



Q: My four-year-old is shaky when it comes to holding a pencil. Should I make him practice more?

A: Instead of just practicing pencil-holding, try strengthening his fine motor skills in general. For instance, let him flip coins over on a table. Have him string dried pasta onto yarn. Give him small objects to grab with tweezers. These are all great motor skill boosters.

Source: "Activities with Fine Motor Manipulatives," Beal Early Childhood Center, www.shrewsbury-ma.gov/schools/beal/readiness/finemotoractivities.html#fine.

Do you have a question about reading? Email readingadvisor@parent-institute.com.



Books to delight your early reader

Why Do Cats Purrr? by Apple Jordan (Scholastic). What makes those crazy kitties do the things they do? Find out in this simple book chock full of the fuzzy feline charmers!

Naughty Little Monkeys, by Jim Aylesworth (Scholastic). "Naughty little monkey, jumping on her bed. It won't be too much longer before she bonks her head." Yikes! Will the bouncy critters survive the whole alphabet?

Enjoy playing with rhymes



Language learning shouldn't be boring—it should be fun! To boost your youngster's language skills, try these rhyming games:

- **Snapping and Clapping.** Start by clapping or snapping a simple rhythm. Then say a word. Repeat your rhythm. Now have your child shout out a rhyme for the word. For example: Clap, snap, "Tree!" Clap, snap, "Knee!" Keep playing with new words and rhythms.
- **Rhyming Sit-Down.** Have your child march around while you say several rhyming words (such as *fog*, *hog*, *log*, etc.). Now throw in a word that doesn't rhyme. When she hears it, she should quickly sit down.

Source: "Rhyming Words Activities," TEAMS Educational Resources, <http://teams.lacoe.edu/DOCUMENTATION/classrooms/patti/k-1/activities/rhyming.html>.

"A good book is the best of friends, the same today and forever."

—Martin Tupper

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