

Building Readers®

How Families Can Help Children Become Better Readers

ChildCareGroup
WorkSource for Dallas County

Building cognitive skills can be child's play

Boosting your child's cognitive—or "learning"—skills shouldn't be complicated. It should be fun! After all, everything you do that encourages him to think, create or move will help his overall learning.

Here are just a few activities to bolster your child's cognitive skills. Remember, these skills will do more than help him become a stronger learner. They may help him become a stronger reader!

- **Group objects** by size or color.
- **Play matching games.**
- **Read all sorts of books** together.
- **Talk about opposites** (like "hot and cold" or "light and dark").
- **Toss a ball** back and forth.
- **Build with blocks.**

Source: "Cognitive Development & A Typical Course of Study for Preschool," Universal Preschool, www.universalschool.com/how-to/teach/cognitive_development.asp.



iStockphoto

Turn summertime into reading time

No summer reading program at your local library? No problem! Invent one of your own. Get out your calendar and:

- **Designate "letter" days.** Jot down a different letter on several dates throughout the summer. If one day is set aside for the letter "P," for example, fill your child's afternoon with things that start with P. Eat *pasta* for lunch; play *pat-a-cake* together; *paint* pictures.
- **Host a neighborhood read-aloud.** Gather the neighborhood kids for storytime. Take turns with other parents to provide readers, books and snacks. Or ask older children to read to the younger ones.
- **Plan a treasure hunt.** Ask your librarian to recommend some children's books about finding treasure. Read them to your child. Then hide a "treasure" and make a map for her to follow.

Look for a local reading program this summer



Planning to sign your child up for a summer reading program at the library? Wonderful! Be sure to:

- **Search** for a program that touches on her interests.
- **Choose** a flexible program that lets her go at her own pace.
- **Look** for a program that offers lots of variety and sounds like fun.

Source: "Summer Reading and Learning for Children: Tips for Parents," American Library Association, www.ala.org/ala/alsc/alscresources/summerreading/tipsresources/tipsresources.htm.

Enjoy Children's Book Week



What's so special about May 12-18? It's Children's Book Week! So log onto the

Children's Book Council website (www.cbcbbooks.org) to learn more about this literacy-rich event. Don't delay—wordy fun awaits!

Play leads to alphabet smarts



You can sharpen your child's ABC know-how right at home with this fun spelling game:

1. **Write** one letter of the alphabet on each of 26 index cards.
2. **Use** the cards to spell a simple word for your child (such as "dog").
3. **Have** your child close his eyes. Now take away one letter.
4. **Show** him "D _ G" and see if he can name the missing letter.

Source: "Alphabet Games and Number Games," ActivityVillage.co.uk, www.activityvillage.co.uk/alphabet_games.htm.

Sharpen your storytelling skills

Your child doesn't care if you're a master storyteller, so you shouldn't either! Still, there's plenty you can do to make your stories shine. For example:

- **Choose stories that interest you.** It's easy to be an enthusiastic storyteller when you enjoy the tale you're telling.
- **Memorize the story.** Really know the tale you're about to tell.
- **Keep it simple.** Don't try to impress your child with a complex story. Instead, share straightforward, kid-friendly tales.
- **Have your child participate.** Draw him into the action whenever possible.
- **Be descriptive.** Use fun language and gestures to help your child "experience" the story.

Source: Barry McWilliams, "Effective Storytelling: A manual for beginners," Eldrbarry.net, www.eldrbarry.net/roos/feest.htm.

You can read in all kinds of weather

Summer weather isn't always perfect, but you can enjoy plenty of outdoor learning activities anyway.

If it rains:

- **Grab an umbrella** and go on a walk around the block. Back home, help your child write about your watery adventure.
- **Pull out** a few "rainy day" books you've stashed away. Read them—and stay dry!—on the front porch.

If it's really hot:

- **Bring books** to the neighborhood pool. Read them with your child during adult swim. (No pool? Make up



istockphoto

silly stories as you play in the backyard sprinkler.)

- **Plop down** in the shade for story time. Share popsicles after you share a book.



Q: My preschooler wanted to hear stories for an hour yesterday, but he could only sit still for five minutes today. What's wrong?

A: Nothing! Preschoolers naturally have quiet days and fidgety days, so be flexible when it comes to story time. On quiet days, snuggle up with your child for a long stretch of reading. But on fidgety days? Keep it short and sweet.

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



Books to delight your early reader

Animal Hide and Seek, by Penny Smith (Dorling Kindersley). Now you see them, now you don't! Who are these "disappearing" animals? Learn all about them in this short book that's long on facts.

Clifford and the Big Storm, by Norman Bridwell (Scholastic). Oh, no! Waves are crashing and rain is pouring down. Who will save Grandma's cozy seaside home? Why, the big red dog, of course!

Get emotional about books



After you read a book or tell a story about feelings, don't stop there. Help your child learn from the experience. Ask questions like, "Have you ever felt like that character? What faces did you make? What did you say? What did you do?" And play games such as:

- **Put on a "mask."** All players cover their eyes, and then someone names a feeling (*sad*, *thrilled*, etc.). Have everyone reveal a face that shows the emotion. Let everyone see her expression in a mirror.
- **Guess the emotion.** One player acts out a feeling, and everyone else guesses the player's emotion. Whoever guesses correctly is the next "actor."

Source: "Emotions in Motion," PBS KIDS, http://pbskids.org/lions/parentsteachers/activities/activities-emotions_in_motion.html.

"No man has a right to bring up children without surrounding them with books."

—Horace Mann

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