

How Can I Help My Child Become a Reader? Parent Guide #15

Learning to read and write is important to a child's success in school and life. Often the subject of reading gets all the attention. It's important to know that reading involves more than just sitting down with a good book.

To help a child become a good reader, he/she must be exposed to all the areas of literacy. Reading, writing, speaking, listening and viewing are all key parts to helping children master and love reading.

- Speak to your child every day. Use many words to share your thoughts and ideas. The number of words children know makes a difference in learning to read.
- Listen to what your child has to say. If you listen well, your child will talk more. Sometimes it takes a long time to put words together to tell a story, so be patient.
- Write down a story your child tells you and read it out loud together. Ask your child to draw pictures that go with the words.
- Introduce your children to their written names. Help them learn to write their names with upper and lowercase letters.
- Let your child see you enjoy reading. Often children love when we read to them. Read the newspaper, magazines, advertisements and mail aloud.
- Sing with your child. Words are repeated in songs so singing is a wonderful way to learn words and hear rhymes.

- Make up stories about your child's daily activities. Use your child as a character in the story. Children love to hear about themselves and their own adventures. They can be real or make believe. Have your child add details to the story.
- Have paper and writing tools available. Be an example by modeling writing throughout the day (letters, shopping lists, to-do lists, etc.). Know that your child's first scribbles and pictures are writing experiences. Have your child read his/her writing to you.

Read to your child every day! Research shows that reading 30 minutes each day with your child will help her/him become a better reader.

- Encourage your child to read to you. All children can share what they know about reading by telling a story and reading pictures.
- Help your child understand important book concepts. Point out the title, front of the book, author, illustrator, back of the book, pictures, words on a page and punctuation.
- When you read, explain that the words on a page are read from left to right. You may want to move your finger over the words as you read them.
- Before you turn to the next page, ask your child to predict what might happen. Give plenty of time to think about the possibilities before you give adult answers.

Reading to your child – continued

- Ask your child to help you read the words that repeat on his/her favorite pages. Read with different voices for the characters. Encourage your child to do the same.
- Notice your child's skills at reading signs in her surroundings. Labels, milk cartons, pictures on cereal boxes, stop signs, and store signs are a great place to start.
- Reading the same story over is good for your child. Children love to hear their old favorites over and over again.
- Children will watch your face for excitement or surprise about the story. Your voice will show that you love reading with your child.
- You have always been your child's first teacher. Keep up the good work.