

Learning to read *begins* before children start school. Help your children develop early literacy skills now; this makes it easier for children to learn to read once they begin school.

Five of the best ways to help your child get ready to read are:

Talking

Singing

Reading

Writing

Playing



Learn how to help your child get ready to read with simple activities such as the ones suggested here.

Find more ideas at your library.

Every Child Ready to Read[®] is a project of the Association for Library Service to Children and the Public Library Association, divisions of the American Library Association.

www.everychildreadytoread.org

Getting Ready to Read at Home

Places to Talk

Talking with your child is one of the best ways to help develop language and other early literacy skills. Conversations help a child express thoughts, learn what words mean, and gain new information about the world. Any place is a good place to talk with your child. All you need is to take the time and ignore any distractions. Listen to what your child says, answer questions, add new information, and listen some more! Ten chances to chat during the day include:

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|-------------------|------------------------|
| Morning routines | Doing household chores |
| In the car | At the store |
| Waiting in a line | During bath time |
| Before a nap | Before bedtime |
| During meals | Out on a walk |

Places to Sing

Singing helps children hear the distinct sounds that make up words. This is an important early literacy skill. Songs also teach new vocabulary and introduce new ideas and concepts.

Sing with your children any chance you have: at home, in the car, during a walk. You don't need a perfect voice, just some enthusiasm. Play music that was written especially for children. Check out music CDs from the library or listen to family-friendly music online from sites such as www.freesongsforkids.com or www.speakaboos.com/songs.

Move to the music. Children develop motor skills as they clap, jump, twirl, and spin to music. Make simple musical instruments and play them as you sing. Fill a plastic bottle with cereal or use a pie-tin and wooden spoon as percussion instruments. Need more ideas for what to make? Find help at the library.

You also can sing nursery rhymes or sing instead of reading a book. Find a book that is based on a song (ask your librarian for help) or make up a simple tune for one of your child's favorite books

Places to Read

Shared reading—or reading books together—is the single best way to help children develop early literacy skills. Read together every day and talk about the books you read.

Create a special space for your children to look at books. Have a comfortable chair or pillows and a small shelf or basket for favorite books. Make sure there's room for you and your child to sit together and that your child can reach books without needing help. Encourage your child to pretend to read a book to a favorite stuffed animal.

Have a special spot for library books. Keep a list of favorite books to check out and the names of authors you especially enjoy. Write down questions your child asks. On your next visit to the library, look for books related to your child's interests.

Show your child that reading is important by letting him or her see *you* read.

Places to Write

Reading and writing go together. Writing activities help children learn letter names and sound out new words. Writing also helps children understand that written words represent ideas, places, and events.

Make it easy for your child to write throughout the day. Set up a space where your child can go on his or her own and use writing materials. Provide pencils, crayons, or markers of different sizes so your child can write with what is most comfortable. Use unlined paper. When your child is ready to write letters, begin with uppercase letters. Try writing favorite words first, such as your child's name or "Mom" and "Dad."

Show examples of your writing: lists, letters, thank you notes, instructions, etc. Write your child a note and leave it in the writing area. Display your child's writing for the entire family to see. Save what your child writes in a box or basket.

Places to Play

Children learn how to express themselves, the meaning of words, and other early literacy skills by playing. Play requires a little space, simple props, and some imagination and encouragement. You don't need special toys or expensive electronics. Provide inexpensive props like large boxes, old clothes or costumes for dress up, empty food containers, paper shopping bags, and empty paper towel rolls. Make sock puppets; create a puppet stage using a sheet draped over two chairs and act out a favorite story.

Encourage your child to create stories by imagining he or she is in another place or pretending to be someone else. Play comes naturally to young children and is one of the primary ways they learn. Provide plenty of opportunities for your child to play.