

# BUILDING READERS®

How Families Can Help Children Get Ready to Read

Readiness Program  
Intermediate Unit 1

## Help your child develop speaking and listening skills for strong reading abilities

Building strong listening and speaking skills is critical to your child's language development—which becomes the foundation for reading. To help your child develop these important skills:

- **Speak to her clearly** and correctly. Try not to use “baby talk” as your child gets older.
- **Have conversations often.** Ask your child questions and encourage her to answer. Be sure to really listen to what she says.
- **Model good listening behavior.** Make eye contact with your child when she talks.
- **Give multi-step directions.** “Find your shoes. Bring them here.”
- **Encourage her to express** her feelings and emotions with words.
- **Ask questions that require** her to make a decision and answer using words.



Source: K. Stanberry, “Understanding Language Development in Preschoolers,” Get Ready to Read, <http://tinyurl.com/br45tsn>.

“Reading is to the mind what exercise is to the body.”

—Joseph Addison

## Involve your child in active reading

You already know how important it is to read with your child often. To make the most out of reading, you should also engage in reading and talking about the stories. Your young reader will learn more if he is actively involved, rather than just listening and looking.

Here's how you can get him involved:

- **Prompt your child** to say something about what is on the page. Ask, “What is this?”
- **Evaluate your child's response.** “That's right. It's a duck.”
- **Expand his response** by rephrasing it and adding more information. “Ducks say *quack*.”
- **Rephrase the prompt** to see what he has learned. “What do ducks say?”

After the first read-through, use at least one prompt per page.

Source: R. Whitehurst, “Dialogic Reading: An Effective Way to Read to Preschoolers,” Reading Rockets, [www.readingrockets.org/article.php?ID=431](http://www.readingrockets.org/article.php?ID=431).

## Build your child's love of reading by making it fun

Surprisingly, *what* you read to your child isn't as important as *how* you read to him.

Make reading fun.

Point to pictures and name the things you see. If the book is about animals, see which animals he can identify.

Laugh at the silly things you read. If a word sounds funny, say it again. Be silly. You'll both have fun.



## Practice tricky tongue twisters before reading with your child

Do you get tongue-tied when reading tricky rhymes to your child? Don't give up—it just takes a little practice!

Taking a quick moment to run through the book will put you at ease and make story time go smoothly.



## Ask about your child's reading skills

Parent-teacher conferences are important—even in preschool. When you meet with your child's teacher, you have the opportunity to learn about your child's academic and social development.

Be sure to ask your child's teacher how your child's reading and language skills are developing. Does your child recognize letters and sounds? Is she interested in books and reading? How can you help her reading at home?



## Pumpkins inspire fall reading activities

Celebrate October and harvest season with your child by reading a book about pumpkins. *The Biggest Pumpkin Ever* by Steven Kroll and *Too Many Pumpkins* by Linda White are good choices. You can also read nonfiction books about pumpkins and autumn, such as *Seed, Sprout, Pumpkin, Pie (Picture the Seasons)* by Jill Esbaum or *Autumn is Here!* by Heidi Pross Gray.

Then, with your child, make up a new story about pumpkins—and act it out with finger puppets.

To make pumpkin finger puppets:

1. **Cut small pumpkin shapes** out of orange construction paper.
2. **Have your child** decorate them.
3. **Tape a loop of string** on the back of each puppet for your finger.

You and your child will have a great time, and she'll be building important motor and language skills, too!



## Scribbling can jump-start your child's writing

Does your preschooler “help” you write when you're typing away at the computer? Terrific! But give him good old-fashioned pencils and paper, too.

Writing—which begins with scribbling—is an important part of learning language. To nudge your little scribbler along, try these tips:

- **Demonstrate good writing.** When you write notes, etc., be neat. It'll teach him what proper handwriting looks like.
- **Give reasons for writing.** Need to make a shopping list? Let your child help. Show him that writing is part of everyday life.
- **Make it entertaining.** Plain pencils and paper are okay, but he'll enjoy writing with markers, crayons, chalk and colored paper even more!



**Q:** My child goes nonstop all day, and it seems that she'll only sit still for a story right before she goes to bed. What should I do?

**A:** Make books a bedtime ritual! Keep a stack of kid-friendly titles on hand, and read several of them together every night. Not only will it help your child enjoy books and become a reader, it'll also be a calm, quiet transition from playtime to sleep time.

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

## Keep an eye out for possible reading difficulties

It's never too early to watch out for potential reading difficulties. Children who have trouble with sounds in words often have difficulties with reading later. Keep an eye out for signs that your child is struggling with rhymes or has trouble recognizing words that start with the same sound.



If you have concerns about potential reading difficulties, be sure to talk with your child's teacher.

**Source:** S. Hall, “Early signs of a reading difficulty,” Great Schools, <http://tinyurl.com/ohucca7>.

## Books to delight your early reader

- ***I Like Old Clothes*** by Mary Ann Hoberman (Alfred A. Knopf). Whether for dress up or everyday wear, one little girl loves hand-me-downs—especially imagining how previous owners enjoyed the clothes.
- ***Green*** by Laura Vaccaro Seegar (Roaring Brook). From forest green to lime green to jungle green, explore the different shades of green that are all around us.
- ***It's Library Day*** by Janet Morgan Stoeke (Dutton Children's Books). Everyone is smiling because today is Library Day! After a class listens to a story and picks out new books, they count down until the next Library Day.



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