BUILDING READERS®

How Families Can Help Children Get Ready to Read

Frazier School District

Spark your child's interest in storytelling

Making up stories with your child is not only fun—it boosts reading readiness skills, too. Storytelling also promotes creativity, builds vocabulary and sharpens communication skills. To get started:

1. **Put some items** in an empty box. Use anything you have—a stuffed animal, a feather, a penny, etc. Explain that you are going to make up a story together. Then have your child select two of the items.
2. **Begin the story** based on those two items. For example, if your child picked a stuffed animal and a penny, you might start like this: "This story is about a bear who went to the store."
3. **Ask your child to add details.** What color is the bear? What type of store is the bear in? What will the bear buy?

Once you finish the story together, add different items to the box and start again!

Too many illustrations may distract kids

Children love picture books, but if the stories are filled with too many illustrations, it could slow reading development. Studies show that when young children see multiple pictures on a page, they often struggle to follow the story.

Experts suggest parents:

- **Seek out books** with a single picture per page to hold children's attention and help them better grasp the words they are hearing.
- **Limit lift-the-flap books.** The act of lifting the flaps and looking underneath distracts from the words.
- **Guide children through** multi-illustration stories. Point to the picture that goes with the text you're reading to help your child connect the words to the correct illustration.

Source: Z.M. Flack and J.S. Horst, "Two sides to every story: Children learn words better from one storybook page at a time," *Infant and Child Development*, John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Build phonological awareness

When children recognize rhymes, they are building phonological awareness—the awareness of how sounds work together to make words.

With your child:

- **Build word families.** Think of word endings, such as *–an* or *–at*. Then, brainstorm all the words you can think of with that ending.
- **Fill in the blank.** Say a familiar rhyme but leave off the last word. If you say, "Jack and Jill went up the ...," can your child supply *hill*?

Read and reread favorites

Your child may ask you to read the same story over and over—and that's OK! Rereading familiar stories offers a surprising number of benefits.

Repetition helps your child build:

- **Comprehension.**
- **Fluency.**
- **Word recognition.**
- **Vocabulary.**
- **Confidence.**

To promote reading, read!

Children learn by example, so set a good reading example to encourage your child to read. Here's how:

- **Show how you read** a variety of materials for fun, to learn, and to get directions.
- **Let your child see you** read for pleasure.
- **Share what you read** with your child if it's appropriate.
- **Check out books for yourself** when you go to the library with your child.

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Making predictions boosts thinking skills

The ability to predict the action in a book or the outcome of an experiment is a valuable skill for school success. Preschoolers aren't too young to learn to make educated guesses about what will happen next in a story based on what they know.

To teach your child to predict, use:

- Ask questions while reading. "What will the bear eat?" or "What do you think will happen next?"
- **Experiences.** "What will we see in the grocery store?" "Do you think this bath toy will float or sink in water?"
- **Familiar routines.** "What will we do when we finish with dinner?" "What will you need to do after your bath?"

Discuss the outcomes with your child. "You said we would see apples and grapes in the grocery store. You're right! There they are. Look, I see bananas and strawberries, too."

Expand your child's motivation to learn

When children are excited about reading and school, they will feel more motivated to learn. To foster enthusiasm for learning:

- **Ask specific questions** about your child's life at school. "What is one thing you learned today?" "Did the teacher read you a story?"
- **Ask for a guided tour** of your child's classroom next time you're at school. Note what interests your child most and use this to select books. "You love your class garden. Let's find books on plants at the library!"
- **Let your child** to do some things alone, such as selecting and putting books away.

Q: Preschool isn't "real" school. Does it matter if my child misses a day or two each week?

A: Yes! Preschool may not be required, but it's still very real! Every day your child attends is another day filled with new experiences. It's also another chance to enjoy story time with fellow rookie readers. And by attending preschool regularly, your child is building a great habit for elementary school.

Talk about the basics of print

While there are many types of reading material, the basics of print are the same. Teach your child that:

- **Words are made up of letters.** Point to letters as you say their names.
- **Words on a page go from left to right.** Follow the words with your finger as you read.
- **Words and pictures** both convey meaning. What information can you get from words? From pictures?

Books to delight your early reader

- *Moonday* by Adam Rex. One night, the moon lowers itself into a family's backyard—and doesn't go away when morning comes. Everything in town is different on this very unusual day.
- *At Our House* by Isabel Minhós Martins. This book takes a detailed count of all the people who live together in one house—from their fingers to the number of hairs on their heads.

- ***Rain Romp: Stomping Away a Grouchy Day*** by Jane Kurtz. On a gray and dreary day, one little girl does not want to get out of bed. But she soon learns that the cure for a gloomy day is to sing and stomp in the rain!

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