

Make reading together fun!

Reading together every day can become a treasured time to build a parent-child relationship and provide a valuable opportunity to expose children to literacy early in life.

Helpful parenting tips

- ★ Read to your child right from birth.
- ★ Be warm, encouraging, and responsive to your child as you read together.
- ★ Select books that include characters and themes that your child likes.
- ★ Take your child to story time at the library and get him a library card of his own.
- ★ Be enthusiastic, playful and animated while reading a story.
- ★ Talk to your child and ask questions about the story and pictures in the book.
- ★ Encourage her participation. "That's right – it's a bunny!"
- ★ Let your child choose books and read the same book again and again if that is his choice.
- ★ If she becomes restless or is no longer interested, stop reading and start over later when she is ready to enjoy the experience.
- ★ Don't discipline your child during reading times – he may learn to associate books with negativity. Avoid being impatient, abrupt or angry with your child while reading together.
- ★ Make reading together enjoyable and part of your daily routine.

**For more information on parenting and early learning,
or to order copies of this Spotlight, visit www.ParentingCounts.org.**

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Research Spotlight
Birth to 5 years



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Snuggle Up For Reading!

Connect with your child and share a book together



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Say “Yes” to reading together

It's the end of the day. Dinner is done. The dishes are put away, and you're feeling exhausted. Just one thing left to do before you can click on the television, prop up your feet and unwind: put your toddler to bed.

“Mommy, read me a story!” he says, while you tuck him between the sheets. And before you know it, he's wrapped in your arms while you turn the pages together, giggling at the funny duck in his favorite book.

These are cherished moments, a chance for you and your child to slow down and connect emotionally and physically. Sharing books in a tender, supportive and enjoyable way helps your toddler develop his emergent literacy—and builds the attention, enthusiasm and focus he needs to learn to read and write.

Whether it is a five-minute story before bed, or an afternoon-long visit to the local library, when it comes to reading, the important thing is to make it a positive experience. That starts with the connection your child feels when he is sharing a book with you.



Reading starts at home

In the past, many people believed that literacy began when children entered school and started to learn specific skills. We now know differently. Children actually start developing the skills they need to read and write much earlier in life, well before they reach kindergarten (Sulzby & Teale, 1991; Teale, 1987; Whitehurst & Lonigan, 1998).

School is a great place to learn, but what happens at home is one of the most important factors in a child's development. Sharing books with your child plays a critical role in language growth, literacy and reading achievement at school (Bus, van IJzendoorn, & Pelligrini, 1995).

Reading books together isn't the only way to make a difference. By sharing common everyday moments like reading recipes, magazines, or even cereal boxes, you are showing your child how reading works in your life. Another way to reinforce your child's interest in literacy is by letting her experience stories through her own hands with crayons, paints, pencils, markers or chalk. Encourage her to be a storyteller and let her scribble, draw, paint or write her story in her own way. Experimenting with writing opens another way to connect and further develop literacy skills.

When children are given the opportunity to choose their own books, a visit to the local library may become a favorite pastime. Encourage him to choose his own books for quiet times, bedtime, or even while you wait in a doctor's office.

Bonding through books starts early

Even though young children are unable to read themselves, it's never too early to introduce them to the world of written language. Shared reading time is a good way to help strengthen the bond or attachment between you and your child.

Research has shown that children who formed attachments with their mothers during infancy were more enthusiastic and better able to focus during shared reading with their mothers at 24 months (Frosch, Cox, & Goldman, 2001).

After all, young children may not be able to understand or even enjoy books without the help of an adult. It is up to parents or other caregivers to show their child how books and reading are enjoyable and make them part of the child's normal routine.

Bonding through books starts early

Keep in mind that more is not always better. The way you interact with your child during shared reading times may be even more important than how often you read together.

Getting through the book from start to finish is not the goal. So, if your child wants to read the same page over and over again or look at the pages out of order, don't be afraid to follow. Spend time talking about the pictures and words. Ask and answer questions about the story and characters. Encourage your child to participate and let her lead the way, even by finishing sentences if it is a familiar story.

“Hey Diddle Diddle, the cat and the fiddle, the cow jumped over the...” you pause.

“Moon!” your child shouts enthusiastically.

“That's right! The moon!”

Be sure to praise your child for trying even if she doesn't get it right.

If your child gets bored with a book, or wants to make up her own story, that's okay too. The important thing is to make reading together a positive experience. If she is tired or hungry, reading might not be the first order of business. Getting impatient, or demanding that your child pay attention won't make this a positive experience for either of you. Be patient and sensitive to your child's needs as she learns. If reading is fun, your child will want to read more often.

