



■ ■ ■ ENCOURAGING READING AND WRITING ■ ■ ■ AT HOME

Dear Parents,

Does your child know how to read the words *K-Mart*, *McDonald's*, and *Coca-Cola*? Great! Then your child is learning how to read. The print that surrounds your child in his or her environment is an important part of reading. You can encourage reading and writing by showing your child the power of print and helping him or her make sense of it.

Here are some things that you can do at home:

1. Ask your child to "read" symbols such as arrows, figures on restroom doors, etc.
2. Ask your child to read signs for stop, speed limit, and railroad crossings.
3. Read placemats, napkins, and other printed materials when eating at a restaurant.
4. Ask your child to write captions for family photos. As your child dictates to you, write down the exact words.
5. Write and use recipes with your child.
6. When writing letters or notes, give your child writing materials too.
7. Give your child your "junk mail" to open while you open your mail.
8. Make a shopping list together and give your child outdated coupons to use at the grocery store.
9. Visit the library with your child and borrow books together. Give your child books as presents.
10. Write down activities that you and your child can do together. For example, "We can go to the library tomorrow."

When your child discovers the power of print, he or she is on the way to becoming a successful reader!

Sincerely,

Monica Murnane

■ ■ ■ READING WITH YOUR CHILD ■ ■ ■

Dear Parents,

How often does your child see you reading a newspaper, a book, or a magazine? By reading at home, you are showing your child that reading is an important and enjoyable experience. Another enjoyable experience is reading to your child. This can be a valuable part of your daily routine. The more you read to your child, the more he or she will develop a desire to read.

When you read to your child, the child is learning much more than just what happens in the story. As children hold and handle books, they learn how to turn the pages, where the story begins and ends, and how a story is told. As children become interested in books, they become curious about the words and pictures in the books. This is a first step in their becoming readers. Children who have a favorite book often ask for rereadings of that book. Rereadings help them become familiar with the words and their meaning—an important step in learning to read.


Children love guessing what will happen next in a story or what will appear next in the pictures. Books with short, simple, repeated words allow children to do this.

Here are some suggestions for where and when to read to your child:

1. **Find a quiet place.** Select a quiet place and time for reading so your child will be able to listen without distractions.
2. **Be comfortable.** Informal seating together on a couch, a bed, or the floor promotes a feeling of closeness while reading.
3. **Read every day.** You can communicate the pleasure of a good story by spending 10 to 20 minutes a day reading. You and your child will look forward to this happy time together.

How to read to your child:

1. **Begin with a smile.** As you begin to read, let your child know that you enjoy the time together.
2. **Read slowly.** Read in a low, relaxed voice, using expression where it is called for in a story. Your child will enjoy repeating favorite phrases with you. Encourage your child to join in the reading.

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3. **Repeat words.** Your child may learn words that are repeated in a story. Call attention to words that are repeated frequently and encourage your child to say them with you as he or she recognizes them.
 4. **Ask questions.** Children enjoy being involved in a story. As you read, ask "What do you think will happen next?" or "Why do you think the bear is mad?" The conversation that goes with reading aloud is as important as the reading itself. Discuss the story with your child and ask questions that draw attention to pictures, require thinking and interpretation, elicit prediction, and relate the story to everyday life.

What to read to your child:

1. **Read enjoyable books.** Select books that you and your child will enjoy. Think about your child's interests and experiences as you make selections. The public library will be happy to help you find and choose good books for your child.
2. **Read a variety of books.** Sharing storybooks, wordless books, pop-up books, nursery rhymes, and poetry will give your child a sense of the wide variety of enjoyment that reading can bring.
3. **Use picture books.** Children like picture books with large illustrations that they can examine in detail. They like to recognize objects from their own experiences.
4. **Read predictable books.** Predictable books are books with predictable, repetitive texts. They can help children make predictions, draw conclusions, and retell the story.
5. **Reread stories.** Read your child's favorite stories over and over again.

Enjoy reading with your child!

Sincerely,

Monica Humane

■ ■ ■ HELPING YOUR CHILD WITH WRITING ■ ■ ■

Dear Parents,

Just as your child is learning to read by reading, he or she is also learning to read by writing. You can help by encouraging your child to write at home. Please remember—this does not mean practicing handwriting skills. It doesn't matter if the letters are backward or formed incorrectly. What does matter is that your child is writing things that are meaningful to him or her.

First writing efforts will probably look like scribbles to you, but your child will soon refine these marks to look like letters and words. Your praise for any writing attempt will help your child to be a better writer. As soon as children know some letter sounds, they often use these sounds to invent their own spelling. Accept whatever spelling your child writes because he or she is actually experimenting with words.

Here are some ways to help your child with writing:

1. Provide writing materials. Let your child use different kinds of paper, markers, crayons, pencils, and paints. Maybe you can set up a special "writing place" where your child can get these materials.
2. Let your child see you write. Explain to your child what your writing says and why you are writing. When you make shopping lists, leave phone messages, or write notes, provide paper and pencil for your child to write, too.
3. Write messages. Help your child write reminders and calendar entries, such as "Library day is Friday" or "Tomorrow we go to the dentist."
4. Keep a home calendar. Record and anticipate important events with your child.
5. Narrate family happenings. Help your child write stories to go with drawings of family events. Relatives might enjoy reading these!

Have fun writing with your child!

Sincerely,

Monica Spunane