

PARENT CORNER

Simple Strategies Spell Early Reading Success

By Patricia von Oelhoffen

Parents can have a powerful impact on their children's literacy and learning development by putting a few simple strategies into action, while promoting positive attitudes about reading.

By reading with your children every day, you enhance their chances at school by raising their self-esteem and reading ability. Becoming a better reader helps a child do better in social studies and mathematics, as well as in the humanities. By reading with your child, you help develop good reading habits; for example, children will read on their own a book that has been read aloud to them. Here is a list of reading activities that you and your children can participate in.

- Read a bedtime story. These enjoyable times when you and your child are close together are essential in establishing a lifelong habit.
- Take turns reading to each other. Beginning readers need help in moving from word-to-word reading to smooth, meaningful reading. Take turns. You read one page and your child reads the next.
- Read your child's favorite book over and over again.
- Read a variety of children's books. If your child likes animals, get books about different animals. If your child likes sports or airplanes, get books on those subjects.
- When reading a book with large print, point word by word as you read. This helps children learn that reading goes from left to right and understand that the word they say is the word they see.
- Ask an older child to read to the younger one. This practice improves fluency and helps the child to see the joy of sharing books with others.
- Read stories with rhyming words and lines that repeat. Invite your child to join in on rhymes and refrains.
- Discuss new words. For example, "This is a stadium. Which sports do you think are played in a stadium?"
- Stop and ask about the pictures and about what is happening in the story.

Spontaneous reading games are fun for children and parents alike. Here are some suggestions:

- Hold the book the wrong way. Your child should correct you. This activity reinforces the child's understanding of how to hold a book.
- Start from the back of the book. Notice if your child will correct you.
- Read a familiar book. Name different characters incorrectly; instead of reading "Snow White," for example, say, "Once upon a time there were three bears." Your child should correct you. This verifies that your child is matching words with pictures.



Photo: Kelly Higashi

▷ Home reading activities help children develop crucial skills.

Finally, here are some home activities that your child will enjoy and that support learning of alphabet names and sounds:

- Letter Hunt. Hide alphabet cards around the room. Invite your child to find a card, say its sound, and then say a word that starts with the sound (such as cat for the letter C).
- Sound Hunt. Give your child a bag containing letters of alphabet cards. After pulling one letter out of the bag, ask your child to find something in the house that begins with that letter, and then place the letter on the item. For example, "t" could go on the table; "b" on the bed; "r" on the refrigerator.

Spending 20 minutes a day on reading activities with your children can make a lifetime difference in their ability to read quickly, easily, and with enjoyment!

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No Child Left Behind: Helping Your Child

The U.S. Department of Education (U.S. ED) is reissuing *Helping Your Child*, a popular publication series for families and caregivers. These colorful booklets are updated with new information, including the latest research-based practices for helping children learn. They offer practical activities to stimulate children's learning and a list of resources such as books, computer programs, and websites that adults and children can enjoy together. Titles include "Helping Your Child Become a Reader," "Helping Your Preschool Child," "Helping Your Child With Homework," "Helping Your Child Through Early Adolescence," a new publication, and "Helping Your Child Succeed in School." Booklet orders and further information on this series can be obtained by visiting www.ed.gov/pubs/parents/hyc.html.