

Fun at Home with Preschoolers: Getting Ready to Read!



Is your child between the ages of 3 and 5? If so, you can do a lot to make getting ready to read a natural part of daily life. Most 3- to 5-year-olds still have a way to go before they are ready to read and write. There's no need to rush this natural growth, but you can help your child build the knowledge, skills, and habits he or she needs to become a reader and a writer later on.

Turn your child's play into activities that help her get ready to read and write!

- Be sure your child has time to play with other children so he can learn to communicate with his peers.
- Engage in conversation with your child. Listen to her, and share your own ideas with her. Use "difficult" words sometimes, and talk about what they mean.
- Play games with your child using letters, words, numbers, or counting. Learning rhythm and rhyme through songs and finger-plays can help a child get ready to read.
- Take your child to grocery stores, parks, museums, art galleries, and community events. You'll be helping him learn new words and learn more about the world around him.

Show your child how you use reading and writing in your everyday activities.

- When you make a list or write a note for someone, or when you read the newspaper, a map, or your email, your child sees that reading and writing are useful.
- Talk with your child about signs, schedules, and books, and encourage her to try reading them.
- Read aloud to your child. Don't know what to read? Your librarian can help.
- Visit the library, and help your child get a library card as soon as she can.

Encourage children to draw, write, and use books for fun and learning.

- Keep books, magazines, and games at home where your child can use them.
- Keep materials for drawing and writing where your child can use them.
- When your child draws, ask him to tell you about the picture. Write his words down so he can go back to them and "read" them himself.
- Show that you value and respect your child's efforts to read and write. Remember that even scribbles are a step toward writing!
- Choose TV and videos wisely. Shows such as *Sesame Street* and *Word World* are meant to get children interested in reading and writing.
- Select electronic games carefully. Some games and apps are designed to help children learn skills they need to read and write. You can find many no-cost, ad-free games at pbskids.org. The Web site Reading Rockets also rates low-cost print awareness apps.
- The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that preschool-age children have no more than a total of 1 to 2 hours of high-quality TV or computer time each day. After all, there are so many other things to do!

For related Web resources, see "Fun at Home with Preschoolers: Getting Ready to Read!" at <http://illinoisearlylearning.org/tips.htm>.

Any opinions, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this tip sheet are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Illinois State Board of Education.



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