

Helping Children Learn[®]

Tips Families Can Use to Help Children Do Better in School

Delta Head Start / Early Head Start



April 2016

Try five strategies now to maximize reading success

The early childhood years are a critical time in the development of your child's reading ability. Children who miss out on many pre-reading experiences before elementary school will have to work harder to catch up to kids who have had those experiences.

Research shows that parents have the most influence over their young child's emerging literacy. Here are five things you can do right now to raise a great reader:



- 1. Show your child you think reading is important.** Let her see you reading, but don't stop there. Say, "I'm learning a lot while I read. Why don't you read, too?" Then hand her a favorite picture book.
- 2. Let your child know that you expect her to be a reader.** "Soon you'll be learning to read in kindergarten. That will be so exciting!"
- 3. Keep reading and writing tools on hand.** Visit the library often and let your child choose a variety of books each time you go. Dollar stores are a great source for pencils, crayons and paper.
- 4. Read with your child every day** for at least 15 minutes. Point to each word as you read it. Talk together about the pictures. Make some predictions about what will happen next.
- 5. Talk to your child about everything**—what you're going to do next, the toys she's playing with, the weather. Hearing your words builds her language and vocabulary, which are key elements of literacy.

Source: E. Burton, "Parent Involvement in Early Literacy," Edutopia, nswc.com/readnow.



Share activities that care for the planet

Earth Day, April 22nd, is the perfect time to help your child learn about the environment and how to respect and care for it. Here are some ways you and your child can celebrate nature together:

- **Plant something.** Planting teaches children that nature has needs. Plants need food, water and air to live, just as people do. Help your child plant vegetable or flower seeds in pots and keep them watered. He will be able to see the results of his efforts.
- **Use natural materials** to create art. Go on a walk and let your child pick up feathers, leaves and other natural elements. Bring them home and make a collage by gluing them to paper.
- **Find new uses for old things.** Converting some items instead of throwing them out teaches your child about repurposing. Decorate a jar to make a vase. Turn a paper bag into a book cover. Use plastic two-liter bottles as bowling pins or bats for your child.

Make a cozy 'learning spot'

Having her own snug, comfy "learning spot" can make your preschooler more eager to learn. To create one:

- 1. Find a small space.** It can be a corner of her room.
- 2. Add pillows, books, paper and crayons.** Let your child pick a stuffed animal "learning buddy."
- 3. Read, draw and learn** together in the spot often. Encourage your child to use the learning spot on her own, too.



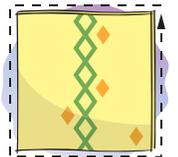
Teach skills that help kids get along in school

Teachers say social skills are more important to kindergarten success than being able to read or write. To help your preschooler develop them, encourage him to:

- **Cooperate with others.** Invite a classmate over or meet up at a park.
- **Share.** Help your child take turns and let others play with his toys.
- **Empathize with the feelings** of others. Ask him how a book character feels after something bad happens.

Explore geometry at home

When your preschooler recognizes and names a shape she sees, she's using geometry. To have some fun discovering geometry together:



- **Go on a shape scavenger hunt.** With your child, look around your home and name shapes you see: round table, rectangular place mat, square napkin.
- **Learn about lines.** Talk about how *horizontal* lines go side to side and *vertical* lines go up and down. Give your child some pictures. How many horizontal and vertical lines can she find?



How do I use consequences to discipline my child?

Q: I've heard that I should use consequences rather than punishment to discipline my four-year-old. I'd like to try this, but I need some explanation. How exactly do consequences differ from punishment?

A: Great question! At first, punishment and consequences seem similar. But there are some important differences:

Punishment:

- **Often happens in anger.** "You broke the lamp! Go to your room!"
- **Often comes with a lecture.** "I've told you a million times not to play ball in the house!"
- **Doesn't always relate** to what your child did wrong. Going to his room has nothing to do with playing ball or breaking something.

Consequences:

- **Include empathy.** "Oh, you broke the lamp. I bet you feel bad. What do you think you should do now?"
- **Focus only on the current incident.** Don't bring up past mistakes.
- **Relate to the misbehavior.** "Help me clean this up. Now we can't go out to eat as we'd planned. We need to save money to replace the lamp."
- **Result in your child learning a lesson.** "If I play ball in the house, I may break something that needs to be replaced. Replacing things costs money that could be used for doing something fun."



Parent Quiz

Are you inspiring your child to write?

Children love to do things the people around them are doing. That's how they learn to write, by seeing others do it and imitating them. Are you fostering your child's desire to write? Answer *yes* or *no* to the questions below:

1. **Do you read** to your child at least once a day? Do you point out written words?
2. **Do you let** your child see you write things such as shopping lists and notes?
3. **Have you shown** your child how to hold a pencil, marker or crayon?
4. **Do you make sure** she has easy access to supplies such as pencils and paper?
5. **Do you write down** your child's stories as she tells

them? Let her illustrate them and then read them again.

How well are you doing?

More *yes* answers mean you're doing a good job of nurturing your child's desire to write. For each *no*, try that idea.

"A good education is the doorway to opportunity; a positive attitude is the stairway to success."
—William Arthur Ward

Appreciate differences with food, books and songs

To thrive in preschool—and in the world—your child needs to relate to people who are different from himself. Try to introduce him to people from many cultures. Personal contact teaches him that diversity isn't negative or scary. Together, you can also:

- **Eat food** from other cultures.
- **Read children's books** from a variety of places, or that tell familiar stories in new ways, such as Susan Lowell's *Three Little Javelinas*, a Native-American version of *The Three Little Pigs*.
- **Sing songs** from other countries.

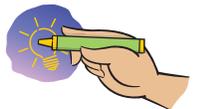
Sharpen your child's focus

Concentration plays a huge role in building thinking skills. To boost your preschooler's concentration, try these activities:

- **Repeat the beat.** Clap out a simple beat, such as three claps, pause, two claps. Ask your child to repeat it.
- **What's that sound?** Stop and ask your child to listen until she can tell you at least one sound she hears. Don't accept "nothing" for an answer!

Encourage artistic freedom

Art teaches cause and effect, problem-solving and self-expression. Your child will learn the most from art if you give him freedom to make decisions and create on his own. To spur him on:



- **Don't direct his efforts.** The process is more important than the result.
- **Talk about his creations.** Describe what he's done. Note what you like most.
- **Ask him about his work.** What was he thinking about?
- **Proudly display** his artwork.

Source: P. Saraniero, "Giving Feedback: Food for Thought for Parents," ArtsEdge, The Kennedy Center, niswc.com/artist.

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