



For Parents: 1st Steps toward Learning to Read

- Preschool and play groups give the young child the chance to communicate with other children of the same age, building verbal fluency.
- Allow your child to ask a hundred questions of you a day. Just kidding, for some kids a hundred questions will only get them through lunch. The point is, by asking questions, your child is creating an enriched verbal environment for himself, laying the foundations for active, independent learning.
- Explain to your child, in the language of his everyday world, how things work, cause and effect, and chronological order. For example, as you pull up to the grocery store, say, First, we're going to get a basket, then we're going to buy our food, then we're going to pay for it, then we'll be ready to go home.
- Continue to name objects as you did when your child was very little. Expand his vocabulary by describing more complex objects, as well as actions and advanced concepts.

Observing the Use of Reading and Writing as Tools to Accomplish Desired Tasks

- Point out the street and store signs in your community - fast food restaurants, stop signs, favorite stores. Your child will quickly learn the difference between the Taco Bell and the Burger King signs, but more importantly, he will internalize the function of symbol recognition. If you want a taco, you don't want to go into the store under the Burger King sign.
- Are you a list maker? Let your child observe as you write your grocery or to-do list. Let her make her own lists. The scribbles and squiggles may mean nothing to you, but to her they represent ice cream and Oreos.
- Provide the materials and opportunities for pretend play that recreate activities that involve reading and writing - school, store, restaurant, office.

Experiencing the Joy and Pleasure of Language and Reading

- Sitting in Daddy's lap while he reads a favorite picture book is one of life's early pleasures. Let your child choose his favorite books, and read to him every day.
- Choose books that include rhymes and rhythms - Mother Goose rhymes, as well as other books of poetry for young children.
- Don't confine your reading to just picture books. Include longer stories so that your child will experience the flow of the narrative of a story. A great long story is A.A. Milne's *The House on Pooh Corner*.
- Keep plenty of writing materials at home - colored papers, markers, gel pens, crayons. Let your young child play with writing often, making cards, thank you notes, and writing stories (let her dictate the story while you write it).
- Extend your child's favorite stories through role play, discussions, and enrichment activities that are related to the story.

Increasing Language Skills

- Provide toys and activities that teach letter recognition. An educational therapist taught me this trick -write letters in sand, then guide your child's hand to write the letter until he can reproduce your sand letter on his own.
- Help your child make the connection between words and objects. A creative parent I know labeled items in the child's bedroom and around the home. That's a powerful lesson in word recognition, and easy to do with your word processor.