

Action Steps for for Parents

There are a number of steps that parents can take to help prepare their young children to become readers and to support the reading habit once they are in school.

Source:
*Start Early, Finish Strong
How to Help Every Child
Become a Reader*
U.S. Department of Education



- Feed your child a diet of rich language experiences throughout the day. Talk with your infants and young children frequently in short, simple sentences. Tell stories, sing songs, recite nursery rhymes or poems, and describe the world around them to expose them to words. Name things. Make connections. Encourage your child's efforts to talk with you.
- Try to read aloud to your children for 20 minutes daily beginning when they are infants. Ask caring adults to be your children's daily reader when you are not available.
- Have your child's eyesight and hearing tested early and annually. If you suspect your child may have a disability, seek help. Evaluations and assessments are available at no cost to parents. Call the early childhood specialist in your school system or call the National Information Center for Children and Youth with Disabilities at (800) 695-0285 (Voice/TTY).
- Seek out child care providers who spend time talking with and reading to your child, who make trips to the library, and who designate a special reading area for children.
- Ask your child's teacher for an assessment of your child's reading level, an explanation of the approach the teacher is taking to develop reading and literacy skills, and ways in which you can bolster your child's literacy skills at home.
- Limit the amount and kind of television your children watch. Seek out educational television or videos from the library that you can watch and discuss with your children.
- Set up a special place for reading and writing in your home. A well-lit reading corner filled with lots of good books can become a child's favorite place. Keep writing materials such as non-toxic crayons, washable markers, paints and brushes, and different kinds of paper in a place where children can reach them.
- Visit the public library often to spark your child's interest in books. Help your children obtain their own library cards and pick out their own books. Talk to a librarian, teacher, school reading specialist, or bookstore staff for guidance about what books are appropriate for children at different ages and reading levels.
- You are your child's greatest role model. Demonstrate your own love of reading by spending quiet time in which your child observes you reading to yourself. Show your child how reading and writing help you get things done every day - cooking, shopping, driving, or taking the bus.
- If your own reading skills are limited, consider joining a family literacy program. Ask a librarian for picture books that you can share with your child by talking about the pictures. Tell family stories or favorite folktales to your children.
- Consider giving books or magazines to children as presents or as a recognition to special achievements. Special occasions, such as birthdays or holidays, can be the perfect opportunity to give a child a new book.
- Connect your children with their grandparents and great-grandparents. Encourage them to read books together, talk about growing up, tell stories, and sing songs from their generation.

Action Steps for Caregivers

- Talk with children as you play and do daily activities together.
- Read with children at a regular time every day and when they ask you.
- Take toddlers and preschoolers to the library so that they can choose books to read. Find out about your library's special books and services.
- Create a special place in your child care facility for reading and writing for toddlers and preschoolers.
- Keep books and other reading materials where children can reach them. Add new books as children's skills and interest change.
- Keep writing materials such as washable, nontoxic crayons and markers, paints and brushes, and different kinds of paper where children can reach them.
- Show children how you read and write every day to have fun and to get things done.
- Point out the words to children while at the child care and in the community.
- Encourage children to do things for themselves when they are ready. Let them feed and dress themselves, and clean up after themselves, even if these tasks take more time and are not done perfectly.

Source: *Ready, Set, Read for Caregivers*, A joint project for the Corporation for National Service, the U.S. Department of Education, and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, and Health Communications, Inc.



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