

Learning Partners

Let's Read!

When parents help their children learn to read, they open the door to a big, exciting world. As a parent, you can begin an endless learning chain like this:

You read to your children, they develop a love of stories and poems, they want to read on their own, they practice reading, and finally, they read for their pleasure. When children become readers, their world is forever wider and richer.

Here are some things you can do:

- Read aloud to your child: books, newspaper and magazine articles, the back of the cereal box, labels on cans, or directions.
- Read poems aloud together to learn about rhythm and repeated sounds in language.
- Point to words on the page when you read. Move your finger from left to right.
- Listen to your child read homework or favorite stories every day.
- Go to the library together and check out books. Be sure to ask the librarian for good books or to help you find what you need.
- Have books, magazines, and papers around the house, and let your child see that you like to read too.
- Encourage older children to read to younger children.
- Help experienced readers talk and write about what they read.



Reading Activities

Over and Over Again - for young children

1. Pick a story or poem that repeats phrases, "Assign" your child a phrase to read each time you read a new part of the story.
2. Read a short portion of the story or poem, then stop and let your child repeat the phrase.
3. Encourage your child to act out the story.

For example, with the story of the "Three Little Pigs":

Wolf (parent):	"Little pig, little pig Let me come in."
Little Pig (child):	"Not by the hair on my Chinny-chin-chin!"
Wolf (parent):	"Then I'll huff and I'll puff, and I'll blow your house in!"

Make Sense of Sounds - for beginning readers

1. Look for poems or tongue twisters that repeat sound and letters.
2. Point out these sounds and letter, and explain that they often make the same sound whenever you see them with other letters on the page.

For example:

There once was a fat cat named Matt
And a black car who had a big bat.
The rat put a tack
When the cat turned his back
On the mat where the black cat sat.

A big blue barrel of big blueberries.
Does this shop sell socks with spots?

Read Together - for more advanced readers

1. Ask your child to read to you.
2. Take turns. You read a paragraph and your child can read the next one, or take turns reading full pages one after the other. Keep in mind that your child may be concentrating on *how* to read, and you reading helps to keep the story alive.
3. If your child has trouble reading words, you can help in several ways:
 - Have your child skip over the word, read the rest of the sentence, and ask what word would make sense in the story;
 - Have your child use what is known about letters and the sounds they make to "sound out" the word; or
 - Supply the word and keep reading; enjoyment is the main goal.

Resources: Information was based on research by the National Center for the Study of Writing and Literacy and the Helping Your Child series of books for parents. U.S. Department of Education.

Writing Activities

Scribble Scrabble - for young children

1. Pick some of your child's favorite animals, books, or television characters, or people he or she knows to write about.
2. Plan a story, talking about what happens to the characters.
3. Ask your child questions: "What happens after Jose finds the magic box?" "What do you think Emily would do to get away from the bear?"
4. Have your child write down the story in comfortable ways, using scribbling that looks like writing, using letters and words that he invents, filling in pictures for words.

Investigative Reporting - for advanced writers

1. Have your child gather information by interviewing someone in your family or your neighborhood.
2. Together, choose questions for the interview. Did the person live during a particularly exciting time in history? Did he or she accomplish a major achievement? What does the person do for a living?
3. Look at examples of written interviews in magazines. Using this format, have your child write down the responses from the interview.
4. Have your child edit the interview to cut out ideas that are repeated, to remove halting phrases such as "uh", or "you know", or to put the information in order by topic (sometimes when people talk, they jump back and forth from topic to topic).

Read What You Write - for writers of any age

1. Reading and writing go hand in hand. Have your child read school assignments aloud.
2. Explain that when you read, you should listen to how the writing sounds by asking yourself:

Does the writing sound the way people talk?
Is it smooth or choppy?
Are there any words or ideas missing?
How could the writing be made more interesting? By adding descriptions, using examples, going into more detail with explanations?

3. Encourage your child to read with expression, emphasizing the words in the sentences that are most important to the child.
4. Encourage other children who might be listening to ask questions about the writing.

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Let's Write!

One of the most important parts of knowing how to write well is to feel comfortable doing it. The magic in writing comes from the ideas you have. Let ideas flow, as they would if you were talking. The beauty of the written word is that you can always go back and make changes: rearrange the ideas, correct the spelling, add new ideas, take out the ideas that don't fit. The important thing is to think of writing as a reflection of your thoughts.

Here are some things you can do:

- Show that you write often to make lists, take down messages, write notes to the school, write letters to friends.
- Write to your child: put a note in a lunch bag, make a birthday poster, send a postcard from work.
- Encourage your young children to get ready to write. They can scribble, draw pictures, make designs with letters.
- Play writing and spelling games: have family spelling bees, do crossword puzzles, play scrabble, play waiter or waitress.
- Explain that math problems are a form of writing. $2 + 3 = 5$ is a sentence.
- Talk about why people write. Are they giving step-by-step instructions, telling a story according to when the events happened, describing how something looks, or trying to convince someone to do something?



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