

Parent Guide to Early Literacy for Pre-Readers: Two and Three-Year-Olds

WHAT CAN I DO TO HELP?

“The single most important activity for building the knowledge required for eventual success in reading is reading aloud to children. This is especially so during the preschool years.”

From *Becoming a Nation of Readers*

Vocabulary

- ✦ Talk with your child about what is going on around you. Talk about feelings—yours and your child’s.
- ✦ When your child talks with you, add more detail to what she says.
- ✦ Speak in the language that is most comfortable for you.
- ✦ Read together *every* day. When you talk about the story and pictures, your child hears and learns more words.
- ✦ **Research shows that children who have larger vocabularies are better readers. Knowing many words helps children recognize written words and understand what they read.**

“Vocabulary is learned from books more than from normal conversation with adults or children or from television exposure.”

From *Meaningful Differences in the Everyday Experience of Young American Children*
by B. Hart and T.R. Risley.

Print Motivation

- ✦ Make book-sharing time a special time for closeness between you and your child.
- ✦ Let your child see you reading.
- ✦ Visit your public library often.
- ✦ **Children who enjoy books will want to learn how to read.**

Print Awareness

- ✦ Read aloud everyday print—labels, signs, lists, menus. Print is everywhere!
- ✦ Point to some of the words as you say them, especially words that are repeated.
- ✦ Let your child turn the pages.
- ✦ Let your child hold the book and read or tell the story.
- ✦ Hold the book upside down. See if your child turns the book around.
- ✦ **Being familiar with printed language helps children feel comfortable with books and understand that print is useful.**

Narrative Skills

- ✦ Tell your child stories.
- ✦ Ask your child to tell you about something that happened today.
- ✦ Read books together. Stories help children understand that things happen in order first, next, last.
- ✦ Read a book that you have read before. Switch what you do—you be the listener and let your child tell you the story.
- ✦ **Being able to tell or retell a story helps children understand what they read.**

Phonological Awareness

- ✦ Say nursery rhymes and make up your own silly, nonsense rhymes.
- ✦ Sing songs. Songs have different notes for each syllable in a word, so children can hear the different sounds in words.
- ✦ Play word games such as, “What sounds like ‘ran’?” or “What starts with the same sound as ‘ball’?”
- ✦ Say rhymes and sing songs in the language that is most comfortable for you.
- ✦ **Being able to hear the sounds that make up words helps children sound out words as they begin to read.**

Letter Knowledge

- ✦ Help your child see different shapes and the shapes of letters.
- ✦ Talk about what is the same and what is different between two things.
- ✦ Write your child’s name, especially the first letter.
- ✦ Make letters from clay or use magnetic letters.
- ✦ Point out and name letters when reading alphabet books, signs or labels.
- ✦ Read alphabet books with clear letters and pictures.
- ✦ **Knowing the names and sounds of letters helps children figure out how to sound out words.**



Dialogic or “Hear and Say” Reading

How you read to children makes a difference in *how ready they are to learn to read.*

Use dialogic reading to teach new words.

- ✦ Choose a book that your child already knows well.
- ✦ Ask “what” questions. (“What’s this?” and point to a picture.)
- ✦ Follow your child’s answers with another question. (“What is the dog doing?” Child: “Digging.”)
- ✦ Repeat what your child says and expand on it. (“I think you’re right. The dog is digging under the fence to go find his friend.”)
- ✦ Help your child as needed. Praise and encourage your child.
- ✦ Follow your child’s interests.

Have fun!

Use dialogic reading to develop comprehension skills.

- ✦ Dialogic reading encourages your two- and three-year-old to think and talk by answering open-ended questions.
- ✦ Ask questions like: “What’s going on here?” “Tell me what you see on this page.”
- ✦ Follow your child’s answer with another question: “What else do you see?” “What is happening over here?”
- ✦ Expand what your child says. Add another piece of information.
- ✦ Help your child repeat your longer phrases.

Have fun!