

Reading 1

Preparing for reading

Most parents want their children to learn to read and to read well. You can give your child an early start.

From birth to the age of 4, children have a great capacity for learning language. Toddlers – ages 18-36 months – are able to follow simple stories, look at their own books, and repeat words and rhymes.

Get your child used to books and sounds and letters and words. Studies suggest that preparing your child for reading should involve hearing, sight, touch, and smell.

Young children should not be expected to start reading right away. Stimulating should be done in moderation.

Getting your child used to sounds, letters, and books will help him or her later on when they learn reading skills.

On Back

How to prepare your child for reading.

You & Your Child



A publication of the University of Pittsburgh Office of Child Development made possible with help from the Frank and Theresa Caplan Fund For Early Childhood Development and Parenting Education.

For more Parenting Guides and other information, visit the University of Pittsburgh Office of Child Development on the Internet at www.pitt.edu/~ocdweb/familyissues/guides

You & Your Child may be reproduced for non-profit use only.

Preparing for reading

Appeal to the five senses

Studies suggest that one of the best ways to prepare for reading is to expose your child to activities that appeal to the senses of sight, hearing, speech, touch, and smell.

For example, it helps when a child sees a word, hears sounds when someone is reading to them, or when they can touch an object in the book.

Types of books that appeal to your child's senses include:

- Books that let your child touch, listen, or smell the pictures.
- Books with repeated rhymes and words.
- Picture-pointing books, which you can begin reading to your child at 4 to 6 months and continue into the toddler ages.

Stimulate your child's desire to read

- Set a time to read every day. But don't limit reading to only that time. If possible, read whenever your child asks you to.
- Let your child choose the book you read.
- Allow your child to read his or her favorite book over and over again. It may be boring to you, but not to your child.
- Get your child involved in the story. Ask your child questions about pictures in the book or the story and characters. Ask what happens next.
- Point out real objects that match pictures in books. For example, associate a picture of a house in the book with your house, or a picture of the sun with the sun outside.
- Keep books where your child can reach them.

Motivate your child to read

Try to get your child interested in books and reading even at an early age. Here are a few suggestions:

- Children like to feel a sense of control. Ask your child if he or she would like to listen to a book being read. Or, if your child is old enough, ask if he or she would read the book aloud.
- Adjust the challenge. If the assignment is too easy or too difficult, change it to fit your child's abilities.
- Make reading social. Involve friends and other family members in the reading time.
- Make your child feel successful. Reward your child when he or she listens intently to you read a story. Just a small reward will do.

Have books around the house

Try to make your home an enriching environment. Just having books around will help give your child a sense that reading is important and enjoyable.

Be a good role model

Children try to do what they see their parents do. If you watch a lot of television, your child will want to do the same. The same goes for reading.

You promote reading to your child when he or she sees you reading regularly.

Be enthusiastic about reading

When you read to your young child, try to be enthusiastic, animated, and show that you enjoy reading – such feelings are contagious.

Make sure you involve your child in the book you are reading. Point to pictures and ask your child what they are. Ask what the picture has to do with the story. Ask what he or she thinks will happen next.

