



HELPING YOUR CHILD LEARN TO READ

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Here are some tips for helping your child learn to read. You want to teach your child to love books and so you should not try to force them to learn to read. The most important things to remember are to be patient, to have fun and to praise early and often.

How Can I Help My Child Learn To Read?

Reading books aloud together is one of the best ways you can help your child learn to read. This can be fun for you, too. The more delight you show when you read a book, the more your child will enjoy it. The most important thing is to let your child set her own pace and have fun at whatever she is doing. When reading to your child, you can:

- Run your finger under the words as you read to show your child that the print carries the story.
- Use funny voices and animal noises. Do not be afraid to ham it up! This will help your child get excited about the story.
- Stop to look at the pictures. Ask your child to name things she sees in the pictures. Talk about how the pictures relate to the story.
- Invite your child to join in whenever there is a repeated phrase in the text.
- Show your child how events in the book are like events in your child's life.
- If your child asks a question, stop and answer it. The book may help your child express her thoughts and feelings and solve her own problems.
- Keep reading to your child even after she learns to read. A child can listen to and understand stories that are too hard to read on her own.

Listening To Your Child Read Aloud

Once your child begins to read, have him read out loud. This can help build his confidence in his ability to read and help him enjoy learning new skills. Take turns reading with your child to model more advanced reading skills and to give him a rest.

If your child asks for help with a word, give it right away so that he does not lose the meaning of the story. Do not force your child to sound out the word. On the other hand, if your child wants to sound out a word, do not stop him.



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If your child uses a word that is different from the written word while reading, see whether it makes sense. If he uses the word *dog* instead of *pup*, for example, the meaning is the same. Do not stop to correct him. If your child uses a word that makes no sense (such as *road* for *read*), ask him to read the sentence again, because you are not sure you understand what he just read.

Recognize your child's energy limits. Stop each session when or before he gets tired or frustrated.

Most of all, make sure you give your child a lot of praise for his effort and tell him how happy you are to watch his skills grow! You are your child's first, and most important, teacher. The praise and support you give your child as he learns to read will help him enjoy reading and learning even more.

Learning To Read In School

Most children learn to read by the time they are 6 or 7 years old. Some children learn when they are 4 or 5 years old. Even if a child has a head start, she may not stay ahead once school starts. The other students most likely will catch up during the second or third grade. Pushing your child to read before she is ready can get in the way of your child's interest in learning. Children who really enjoy learning are more likely to do well in school. This love of learning cannot be forced.

As your child begins elementary school, she will begin her formal reading education. There are many ways to teach children to read.

- One way emphasizes word recognition and teaches children to understand a whole word's meaning by how it is used.
- Phonics—sounding out or pronouncing the letters in words—is another way children learn to read. Phonics is used to decode or sound out words.
- Focusing on the connections between spoken and written words is another technique.

Most teachers use a combination of methods to teach children how to read.

Reading is an important skill for children to learn. Most children learn to read without any major problems. Pushing a child to learn before she is ready can make learning to read frustrating. But reading together and playing games with books make reading fun. Children learn best when their parents are involved in their learning. Fostering a child's love of learning will go a long way toward ensuring success in school.

Reading Tips

The following are a few tips to keep in mind as your child learns to read:

- Set aside time every day to read together. Many children like to have stories read to them at bedtime. This is a great way to connect with your child, to wind down after a busy day, and to get ready for sleep.
- Leave books in your child's room for her to enjoy on her own. Make sure her room is reading friendly with a comfortable bed or chair, bookshelf, and reading lamp.



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- Read books that your child enjoys. Let her choose the books she wants to read with you. After a while, your child may remember the words in her favorite book. When this happens, let your child complete the sentences or take turns reciting the words.
- Do not drill your child on letters, numbers, colors, shapes, or words. Instead, make a game out of it and find ways to support her curiosity and interests.

Adapted from *Helping Your Child Learn to Read* (Copyright © 1999 American Academy of Pediatrics), Revised by the AAP Council on Early Childhood (COEC), 2014

Other family resources related to early literacy and early learning include the following:

- Sharing Books With Your Baby up to Age 11 Months
- Sharing Books With Your 1-Year-Old
- Sharing Books With Your 2-Year-Old
- Sharing Books With Your Preschooler
- Sharing Books With Your School-Age Child
- The Secret to a Smarter Baby
- Why It Is Never Too Early to Start Reading With Your Baby

Pediatric Professional ePubs in this AAP series include the following:

- Evidence Supporting Early Literacy and Early Learning
- Finding the Right Book for Every Child
- Selecting Books for Your Program
- What Every Pediatric Professional Can Do to Promote Early Literacy and Early Learning

Please visit aap.org/literacy for further information about resources mentioned within this publication and additional resources on early literacy.

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