

Ways Parents can help their preschooler's literacy skills to prepare them for Kindergarten:

Children become readers when their parents read to them

It is best to read to your child early and often. But it's never too late to begin.

Start today if you haven't already and remember that a child is never too old to be read to.

For preschoolers, reading is a physical activity, as well as a mental activity. Books teach preschoolers that letters and words have meaning. Books help children to develop pre-literacy skills as well as hand-eye coordination and the ability to make connections.

So, when you read, involve your child by:

- ☆ Pointing out objects in the pictures (To help your child make connections between the words and pictures)
- ☆ Following the words with your finger (To help your child learn that the words go from left to right on the page)
- ☆ Having your child help turn the pages (To teach them that the pages turn from right to left)

Try these 4 literacy activities with your preschooler:

Activity 1: Look for books and read together

A quiet time for family members to read on their own may be the only chance a busy parent gets to read the paper. The main thing is to find books you both love. They will shape your child's first impression of the world of reading.

What to do:

- Ask friends, neighbors, and teachers to share the names of their favorite books.
- Visit your local public library and as early as possible, get your child a library card. Ask the librarian for help in selecting books.
- Look for award-winning books. Each year the American Library Association selects children's books for the Caldecott Medal for illustrations and the Newbery Medal for writing.
- Subscribe to a children's magazine like Highlights. Children love getting their own mail!
- Both you and your child should pick out something to read.
- Relax and enjoy while you each read your own selections.



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Activity 2: Repetition and Rhyme

Repetition makes books predictable, and young readers love knowing what comes next. For this activity, you'll need books with repeated phrases and short rhyming poems. A few favorite books are:

- Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day by Judith Viorst
- Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See? by Bill Martin Jr
- Horton Hatches the Egg by Dr. Seuss
- The Little Engine That Could by Watty Piper

What to do:

- Pick a story or a poem with repeating phrases or a poem that you and your child like.
- With a smile or a nod let your child know you appreciate their participation in helping you read.
- As children grow more familiar with the story, pause and give them the chance to "fill in the blanks."
- Encourage your children to pretend to read, especially books that contain repetition and rhyme. Most children who enjoy reading will eventually memorize all or parts of a book and imitate your reading.
- When your child knows what will happen next in a story or poem, they have a sense of mastery over books. When children feel power, they have courage to try. Pretending to read is an important step in the process of learning to read.

Activity 3: Story Talk

Talking about what you read is another way to help children develop language and thinking skills. You don't need to plan the talk, discuss every story, or expect an answer.

What to do:

- Read slowly and pause occasionally to think out loud about a story. You can speculate: "I wonder what's going to happen next!" Or ask a question: "Do you know what a *palace* is?" Or point out: "Look where the little mouse is now."
- Answer your children's questions, and if you think they don't understand something, stop and ask them. Don't worry if you break into the flow of a story to make something clear.
- Read the name of the book's author and illustrator and make sure your children understand what they do.
- Talking about stories they read helps children develop their vocabularies, link stories to their everyday world, and

Activity 4: "The Rhyme Time Game"

What to do:

- Invite your child to clap their hands with you to make words that rhyme with "ap".
- While clapping say "ap" several times so your child can hear the sound, then say "dap" and encourage your child to make up a new word that rhymes.
- Words that you can use to help your child are: bap, cap, dap, fap, gap, hap, jap, lap, map, nap, pap, rap, sap, tap, vap, wap, yap, zap. You can also start this game by having your child choose a word to start the game. If your child says ball you could say tall, mall, call, fall, hall, or wall.