a parent's guide:
raising readers



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"Children's literature is funny, awesome, and beautiful. It makes me laugh and cry."

—**AMBER, SANTA ROSA** *(mother of an 8 and 6 year old)*

Reading prepares your child for learning and doing well in school and life. A child who comes to school having had early, fun experiences with books has a big step up in areas like reading skills, attention span, and success in school. This guide is meant to help you and your little one start reading together and build a tradition that will benefit your family for years to come.

you are your child's first teacher

It s never too early to start reading to children your baby starts learning language before she can even speak! You can give her a head start in language skills before she reaches school age by reading picture books aloud to her and teaching her the alphabet, letter sounds, colors, and new words when she s learning to talk.



READ

It's easier to help your child become a reader than you may think. Take advantage of your surroundings—there are opportunities all around us to teach children to read.

Read Everything

Signs, recipes, magazines, posters—reading is more than books!

Read Everywhere

At the grocery store, on the bus, at home—discover the words all around you.

Read with Your Family

Read to your little brother.

Read to your niece.

Read to your grandchild.

The whole family can help a child learn.

start a family reading routine

What's the most important thing parents can do to make their children readers? The answer is simple: read with them! There are many great ways to build reading into your family's life. In fact, taking the time to find what works best for your own family can make it more likely that routines will stick. Over time, they can develop into cherished traditions of reading together.

Try these suggestions to make family reading a success in your home . . .

Let Your Child See You as a Reader

Your child learns what matters by watching you. When he sees you reading, he learns that reading matters. Make a point of reading in front of your child—whether it's a book, magazine, or newspaper—as often as you can.

Make a Special Time for Reading

Dedicate time every day for you and your child to sit down together to read, look at, and talk about books. Many families routinely read at bedtime, but other times may work better in your home.

Say "Yes" to Reading Requests

As much as possible, say yes to reading when he asks. By reading when your child wants to, you reinforce that reading is a good way for everyone to spend time.

Keep Books on Hand

Always keep books with you and put them in places your child will be—in the car, in the kitchen, in the bathroom. If books are near toys, they're more likely to be picked up. Put books about cooking in the kitchen. Carry books along when you go to the dentist or doctor's office. Doctor's offices also often hand out children's books.

Visit the Library

Check out books as part of your family's weekly routine. The librarian can help you find books at the right age level for your child.

Read Aloud in Your Home Language

If your family speaks a language other than English, read to your child in your home language. This builds students' skills in the home language, and makes it easier for them to learn to speak, read, and write English in the future.

checklist

- ☐ **I take time to talk with my child every day.**
- ☐ **I read something myself in front of my child every day.**
- ☐ **My child and I have special time set apart for reading every day, or as often as we can.**
- ☐ **My child and I often look at books together, each of us sharing what we see and read.**
- ☐ **I have a library card and take my child to the library as often as possible.**

create fun, hands-on moments

When families read together and have fun doing it they tend to read a lot. Once you ve set up reading routines, focus on making them as fun and interactive as you can. Remember, children learn to read not only by reading themselves, but also by being read to.



Choose a Good Time and Place to Read

- Choose a place with few interruptions if you can.
- Turn off distractions like the TV, radio, cell phone, or tablet.
- Choose a time when your child is not tired, hungry, or eager to do something else.

Find the Right Books

- Select books that interest your child. Let your child take the lead in choosing books to read.
- Stories shouldn't be too hard. Reading at home shouldn't be a struggle for your child; it should be a fun, positive experience.
- Build a home library so that your child always has something to read close by.
- Reread your child's favorite books whenever asked.

Have a Fun Time

- When you're reading to your child, make it fun with exciting voices.
- Talk together about the story and pictures.
- Avoid criticism and comparisons with other children.
- Relax! Stop if you feel yourself or your child becoming frustrated.

Talk About What's Being Read

- Talk with your child before, during, and after you read together. This is important because reading isn't just sounding out words—it's understanding what they mean.
- Explain how a book works to your child. Explain the purpose of a book cover and title. Explain that we read books from top to bottom and left to right.
- When looking at the cover and title of a book, discuss what you think the story is about.
- Help your child care by showing connections to her own life. For example, if there's a grandfather in the story, encourage your child to compare him to a real-life grandparent.
- Ask your child questions about what you're reading, especially questions that can't be answered with a simple yes or no. "What part of the story did you like best?" "Why?" "What character did you like best?" Stop in the middle of the story and ask, "What do you think will happen next?"
- You can help your child build skills to better understand what he reads by encouraging him to reflect and recall the meaning of stories.

Give Help When Needed

- If your child stops at an unknown word, always pause and give him a chance to think about the word and the meaning of the story. Wait a full five seconds before saying anything.
- After pausing, you may want to tell your child the word and let him continue with the story.

At other times, you may want to prompt your child in one of the following ways:

- Can you sound it out?
- Put your finger under the word as you say it.
- What is the first and last sound? What word would make sense?
- Does it have a pattern that you have seen in other words? (For example—an, ack).
- You said_____. Does that make sense?
- What word would make sense that would start with these sounds?
- If your child becomes confused, or needs more information to really understand the story, stop and help her build her understanding.



"After the chaos of a busy day, it's always nice to have our reading time to wind down together."

—**JOHN, SANTA ROSA** *(father of a two-year-old)*

checklist

- ☐ **I ask my child to tell me stories and describe things he has done or seen.**
- ☐ **I praise my child's efforts and successes so that she will have self-confidence and be excited about new learning experiences.**
- ☐ **We both select books to read by ourselves and to read aloud together at home.**
- ☐ **My child watches carefully chosen TV programs, and I limit TV and other electronic usage so that there is plenty of time for reading.**

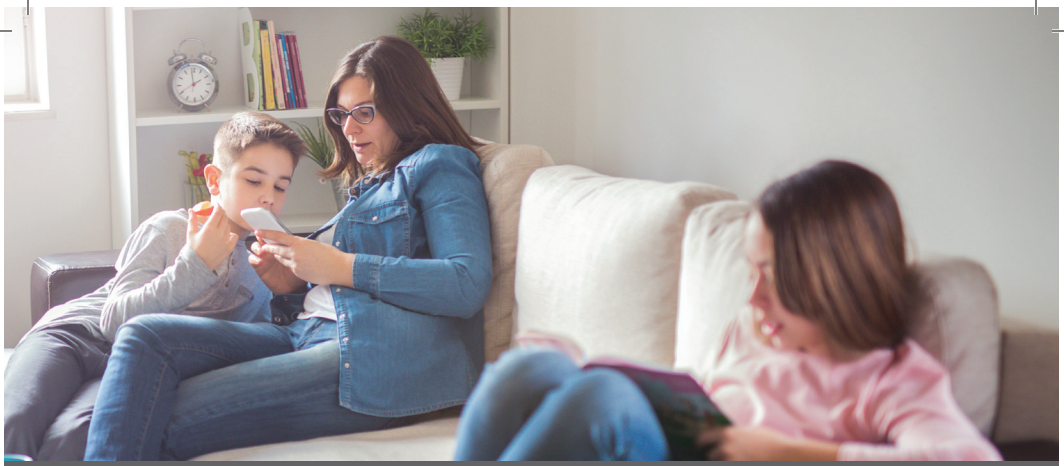
Reading in the Digital Age



Updates in technology and interactive media (like smartphones and iPads) are quickly changing how we communicate in our homes, offices, and schools. While technology is now a part of our daily lives, experts are still researching the best and safest way for kids to use these tools. Please think about the following when it comes to screen time for your little one.

staying motivated





- Try not to expose children to too much technology and media. Parents should think about putting a time limit on how much their children use items like cell phones, TV, tablets, and computers.
- When used appropriately, these tools can help support learning and development.
- Technology can be useful, but it needs to be used in the right ways, at the right time, and by people with the right skills.

Visit fredrogerscenter.org for more information. Source: Fred Rogers Center

Reading doesn't just involve books. There are different sorts of games and activities you can do to help your child continue building language skills. Here are some fun ideas for engaging your young reader.

Alphabet Games & Songs

Play alphabet games. Sing the alphabet song to help your child learn letters as you play with alphabet books, blocks, and magnetic letters. Games, puzzles, and some computer games can help teach letters to children.

Rhyme Time & Silly Sounds

Sing songs and read rhyming books. Teach sing songs and read books that emphasize rhyme or repeat letter sounds. Emphasize the sounds as you sing. Finger poems like "Itsy Bitsy Spider" also help build language skills.

Board Games for Reading Power

Language-based games like Scrabble, Trivia, and Pictionary (all of which have special versions for children) will help develop vocabulary and phonetic skills.

checklist

- ☐ **My child and I play games together, including word and listening games.**
- ☐ **Whenever we take walks or go places together, we talk before, during, and after our outings to maximize our experiences and increase word usage.**

"We read all times of day—sometimes in bed, sometimes in a special chair. The cuddles are the best."

—ERIN, SANTA ROSA *(mother of 4-year-old)*



learn more

Helping your child become a reader may seem overwhelming at first, but once you begin to take advantage of your daily activities, build reading routines, and use the simple suggestions described in this guide, it becomes natural. To find more information and resources, visit **scoe.org/literacy** and **c2csonomacounty.org/iread**.

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