



Curiosity, exploration, discovery



Encouraging your child to read

“The more you read the more things you will know. The more that you learn the more places you will go.” Dr. Seuss.

“Children are made readers on the laps of their parents.” Emilie Buchwald.

Our reading campaign puts the spotlight on parents.

New research has revealed that a third of parents do not actually realise that they are one of the most important influences on enhancing their child's reading and literacy. As a parent of a young child, you are probably more concerned about your child's progress in reading than in any other subject taught in school. To achieve in math, science, English, history, geography, or any other subject, your child must have reading skills that are developed to the point that most of them are automatic. He can't be struggling to recognize words in a school textbook when he is trying to read quickly to grasp the meaning of the text. In other words, children must learn to read before they can read to learn. Here are some suggestions.

Keep it fun, for everyone.

If children are going to enjoy reading, the experience has to be enjoyable. As you read with your children, keep them involved by asking questions about the story, and let them fill in the blanks. You can also create activities related to the stories you're reading. In one household, reading *Little House on the Prairie* prompted lively games of "wagon-train" and discussions about life on the frontier. Another family likes to create mini-plays, acting out the stories they read. While her grandson "helps" in the garden, one grandmother spells words for him to write out using a muddy stick. Once the word is complete, the two of them sound it out together, wipe the word away, then move onto the next. This reading game keeps her grandson occupied for hours.

"Look at what I did!"

Another successful approach to motivating your child is to use some sort of visible record of achievement. A chart or graph that marks the number of books a child has read gives him or her a sense of accomplishment. To spice it up a bit, choose a theme that goes along with your child's interests. One example would be a Reading Olympics, where the child goes for the gold by reading a certain number of books.

A similar method can be used to help expose your child to the wide variety of genres available for exploration. Create a Bingo card or Passport where each space can be filled in by reading a mystery book, or a piece of non-fiction, to give a few examples. Once the goal has been reached, reward your child with something to celebrate his or her special achievement. It doesn't have to be anything elaborate – one-on-one time with a parent or teacher, or an ice cream cone are suggestions from our tip-sters – just something that lets your child know how proud you are of his or her accomplishment.

"I want *that one!*"

Reading should be a choice, not a chore. Make sure there are a variety of books, magazines, and other materials available for your child to choose from, wherever your child may be. Let your child's interests guide his or her reading choices. While it's fine to make suggestions, don't force your conceptions of what your child should be reading onto your child. And, keep an eye on the reading level of the books your children choose. Let them stretch to the best of their ability, but be ready to help if they get discouraged.

Something to talk about

Reading doesn't have to stop when you put the book down. Talk to your child about books you've read and books you think he or she might enjoy. Point out similarities between everyday events and stories you have recently read. If your child has a favorite author, help your child write him or her a letter. For a more structured discussion, consider joining, or starting, a parent/child book club.

Hey, what time is it?

Regardless of how motivated your child is, he or she will not read if there isn't any time to do so. Carve time out of the busy day and dedicate it to reading, both together and on your own. By setting aside specific times, rather than trying to squeeze it in between soccer and dance lessons, you send the message that reading is an important activity, and something your child will enjoy.

Read to and with your child at least 30 minutes each day.

Your child will gain awareness of the conventions of reading (left to right, top to bottom), and even the very young will gain vocabulary. Running your index finger under the print as you read will help your child notice that printed words have meaning. Gradually you can ask her to identify letters and sounds.

Model good reading habits.

Help your child understand that reading is important by letting him see you reading maps, books, recipes, and directions. Suggest reading as a free-time activity. Keep books that are of interest to your child in an easy place for him to reach.

Continue being a good role model.

Let your child see you read.

Encourage your child to read on her own at home.

Reading at home can help your child do better in school.

Keep a variety of reading materials in the house.

Make sure to have reading materials for enjoyment as well as for reference.

Encourage your child to practice reading aloud.

Frequently listen to your child read out loud and praise her often as she does so. Offer to read every other page or even every other chapter to your child. Have conversations and

discussions about the book with your child.

Write short notes for your child to read.

Write down his weekly household responsibilities for him to keep track of or put a note in his lunch bag.

Encourage activities that require reading.

Cooking (reading a recipe), constructing a kite (reading directions), or identifying a bird's nest or a shell at the beach (reading a reference book) are some examples.

Establish a reading time, even if it's only 10 minutes each day

Make sure there is a good reading light in your child's room and stock her bookshelves with books and magazines that are easy to both read and reach.

Talk with your child.

Talking makes children think about their experiences more and helps them expand their vocabularies. Ask your child to give detailed descriptions of events and to tell complete stories.

Give your child writing materials.

Reading and writing go hand in hand. Children want to learn to write and to practice writing. If you make pencils, crayons, and paper available at all times, your child will be more inclined to initiate writing activities on his own.

Restrict television time.

The less time your child spends watching television, the more time he will have for reading-related activities.

Work in partnership with your child's school. The more you know about the type of reading program his school follows, the more you can help by supplementing the program at home. Offer to volunteer in the classroom or school library as often as your schedule allows. Ask the school for parent participation materials.

