



Early Learning Digest

Research-based early childhood development information provided by LifeBalance Solutions

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Reading with Your Child

Children learn to love the sound of language before they even notice the existence of printed words on a page. Reading books aloud to children stimulates their imagination and expands their understanding of the world. It helps them develop language and listening skills and prepares them to understand the written word. When the rhythm and melody of language become a part of a child's life, learning to read will be as natural as learning to walk and talk.

Start Young and Stay with It

At just a few months of age, an infant can look at pictures, listen to your voice, and point to objects on cardboard pages. Guide your child by pointing to the pictures, and say the names of the various objects. By drawing attention to pictures and associating words with both pictures and real-world objects, your child will learn the importance of language.

It's Part of Life

Although the life of a parent is often hectic, you should try to read with your child at least once a day at a regularly scheduled time. But don't be discouraged if you skip a day or don't always keep to your schedule. Just read to your child as often as you possibly can.

Taking the time to read with your children on a regular basis sends an important message: Reading is worthwhile.



One More Time

You may go through a period when your child favors one book and wants it read night after night. It is not unusual for children to favor a particular story, and this can be boring for parents. Keep in mind, however, that a favorite story may speak to your child's interests or emotional needs. Be patient. Continue to expose your children to a wealth of books and eventually they will be ready for more stories.

Through books we can enrich our minds; we can also relax and enjoy some precious leisure moments. With your help, as your children begin a lifelong relationship with the printed word, they can grow into adults who read easily and frequently whether for business, knowledge, or pleasure.

Source: "Reading with Your Child," by Bernice Culinan and Brod Bagert, *Reading is Fundamental*, <http://www.rif.org/books-activities/tips-resources/reading-with-your-child/>.

Toddlers and Reading

Parents see many advertisements promising that their child can become the next Einstein with the right combination of learning toys and DVDs. It's easy to get caught up in the hype that better products make smarter children. And because many of these products emphasize memorization, it can make families think that a focus on memorization is what's important.

Memorizing is often mistaken for learning. Rote memorization is a lower level skill compared to skills developed through using complex language during meaningful conversations with young children about ideas and feelings. Rote memorization may make sense for older children – for example, when learning math facts – but young children's brains simply are not ready for it.

Talking, listening to and telling stories, and hearing new vocabulary words are really the keys to early literacy. These skills need to be built before a child is ready to recognize letters and words. Pay attention to what your child does and make comments that connect his or her experiences.

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Books for Children

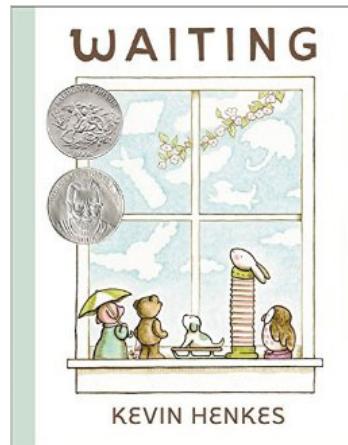
Reading is a perfect way to help children develop essential literacy skills and to spend quality time with them.

Here are some children's book ideas for you to consider:

Waiting, written and illustrated by Kevin Henkes: Like young children often do, the characters in this Caldecott Honor winner are waiting. They wait for rain, snow, wind and the moon, but while they are waiting, interesting things happen. Visitors come and so do gifts, and the characters – bear, pig, rabbit, dog, and owl – use their imaginations to see many wondrous things from their windowsill perch. Then they welcome a new friend who has a surprise of her own. Young readers will be intrigued by the beautiful and thoughtful illustrations that invite interaction throughout.

Shapes/Numbers, written by Xavier Deneux: In these interactive books, the reader can guide young children's fingers across colorful pictures to feel the texture of each number and shape. With the flip of each sturdy page, young children will gain early math concepts such as counting and shape recognition.

How Things Grow, written by Eric Carle: Eric Carle depicts plants and animals with his signature colorful collages on fold-out flaps. When your child opens a flap, she finds an acorn can grow to be an oak tree or a bulb becomes a tulip. Children will love the chance to interact with the fold-out pages in yet another wonderful book by Eric Carle.



The Book With No Pictures, written by B.J. Novak and illustrated by No One!: Actor, author and stand-up comedian, B.J. Novak enters the world of children's literature with *The Book With No Pictures*. As the title says, the book is filled with only words, in different fonts, colors, and sizes. Funny, creative, and clever, the book is guaranteed to get a laugh out of children of all ages.

The Night World, written by Mordicai Gerstein: A young boy explores the night world outside his house at the urgings of his cat, Sylvie. The beautiful illustrations in shades of black, grey, and white guide the reader through the magic of the shapes and shadows of night. Excitement builds as the illustrations gradually burst forth into a world of vibrant color as the sun rises and welcomes a new day.

Source: "The Best Books of 2016: Bright Horizons Books of Excellence for Children of Every Age," by Susan C. Brenner, EdD, http://www.bright-horizons.com/family-resources/e-family-news/gift-ideas-giving-childrens-books-2016?utm_source=efamily&utm_medium=email&utm_content=efam-bestbooks2016&utm_campaign=efam_readmore_bestbooks2016.

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For example, a father says, "Katie, I see you ate all your chicken. Chicken is good for you." The father then extends his arms, flexes his biceps, and says, "It will help you grow big and strong!"

Throughout the day, he can describe a variety of emotions, like surprise, excitement, or sadness. By using a rich vocabulary to describe her everyday life, the parent is saying the words that Katie will soon be ready to use herself.

Ideas to try:

- To help your child develop a rich vocabulary, try using new and interesting words to talk about something familiar (for example, automobile instead of car).
- Read your child's favorite books and let her fill in familiar sounds (such as animal noises) or phrases (like familiar rhymes).

Source: "Toddlers and Reading: Describe but Don't Drill," by the National Association for the Education of Young Children, <http://families.naeyc.org/learning-and-development/reading-writing/toddler-reading>, retrieved December 2016.



If you have concerns about your child's growth and development, please talk to your child's health care provider or call 1-866-693-GROW (4769), to talk to a professional and find out how you can get connected with various resources in Minnesota.