



Reading Summary

Why Reading?

Children are naturally very eager to learn and are interested in letters and sounds. The early years are the right time for developing language skills, playing with sounds, and enjoying books together so children will be ready for reading in the future.

Step 1. Get Your Child Thinking by Getting Their **Input**

- Language development and relationship development set the stage for later reading success. Simple questions and interactions can engage your child. Your child may be responding with a few simple words, and they can respond with their eye contact, their facial expression, and their body movements.
- Make sounds together: *"What does a cow say? It says Moooo. Can you say Moooo?"* *"What does a duck say? It says Quack Quack. Can you say Quack Quack?"* You could also practice clapping or stomping your feet together.

Tip If your child seems unengaged when you are singing or reading together, don't worry. Young children have very short attention spans, and it is ok for them to look away and then re-engage again later.

Step 2. **Teach** New Skills by Interactive Modeling¹

- Read together.
- Read or chant rhymes or poetry to your child -- particularly ones with repetitive words and sounds.
- Check out storytimes or other activities for children at your local library.
- Make your thinking and emotions explicit. Talk about what you notice, how you are feeling, why you are feeling it, and what signs you are giving. *"I have so much fun singing songs with you. La La La La!"*
- Talk aloud about the ways in which you respond to your own big feelings. *"That song makes me laugh. It is fun to clap our hands to the music!"*
- Grow a love of playing with language and stories. This might include sharing funny poems and making silly faces every time you make a rhyme. Diaper changing time is a perfect time for silly faces and rhymes.

Tip Don't expect your child to have a long attention span with any one activity. Follow your child's lead.

Step 3. **Practice** to Build the Foundation for Reading

- Keep books within reach so your child can enjoy them when they choose. Books that let children press buttons to make sounds give them a chance to take some control of their own sound making.
- Use books, songs, rhymes, and games at home that give children a chance to hear examples of language and sounds all around them.
- Read together. When you read stories together, reflect on the story, and you'll take the learning opportunity one step further. *"Do you think Little Red Riding Hood was excited to go to Grandma's House?"*
- Use your child's dolls or stuffed animals to act out moments of enjoying language and reading: *"Let's bring teddy over here so he can hear the story too."*
- Provide opportunities for your child to use language and words in a way that is just a bit more challenging than what they have done before. If they have already heard you read a favorite book to them many times, ask them to help you make the sounds together. Ask: *"What does a cow say? It says Mooooo. Can you say Mooooo?"*
- Practice making music together. Clapping or stomping your feet together is a fun activity to engage your child.

Step 4. **Support** Your Child's Development and Success

- Learn about your child's development. Each new age presents different challenges.
- Recognize effort by using "I notice..." statements like: *"I noticed you were clapping your hands when the music was playing. Hooray!"*
- Build reading and songs into your daily routines and comment on how important those parts of your routines are. *"I notice you like bedtime stories. Reading books together feels good to me too."*

Step 5. **Recognize** and Celebrate

- Smile at your child.
- Make eye contact.
- Use caring facial expressions.
- Be physically gentle and caring with your child.
- Use words to celebrate and encourage: *"You were paying attention so well at storytime today -- Love seeing that!"*
- Recognize small steps along the way: *"I see you are making lots of music with your new toy. I love hearing it!"*
- Build celebrations into your everyday routines. Promote joy and happiness by laughing, singing, dancing, hugging, and snuggling to appreciate one another.

Tip The early years are filled with amazing changes -- and not just for your child. Don't forget to recognize and celebrate your own development and milestones as a parent.

References

1. Office of Child Development, University of Pittsburgh. *Reading 1: Preparing for reading*. Retrieved on April 20, 2020 at https://www.ocd.pitt.edu/sites/default/files/Parent_Guides/Updated-Parenting-Guides/Reading%20Parent%20Guide.pdf.

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