



# Reading Summary

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## Why Reading?

Your child's experiences including talking, singing, rhyming, reading, and playing with you are essential to developing a healthy brain, growing creativity skills, learning about language and emotions, strengthening their relationship with you, and growing lifelong reading skills.

**Tip** These steps are done best when you and your child are not tired or in a rush.

**Tip** Intentional communication and actively building a healthy parent relationship will support these steps.

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

- Language development and relationship development set the stage for later reading success. Simple questions can be conversation starters to engage your child in using language with you, and they also tell your child that you care about what they think and how they feel. Ask your child:
  - *"What do you notice? I notice..."*
  - *"I wonder if the other person feels sad because their head is down. How do you think they might feel?"*
  - *"What are you wondering? I am wondering what happens next."*
- Help your child notice and name their own cues so they can develop self-awareness and learn to trust their own feelings. This includes describing and naming the pride they may feel when they have flipped through the pages of a new book.
- When looking at signs, addresses, menus, grocery receipts, etc., stop and notice letters that are important to your child. Or, if they are ready, ask them if they can find their special letter anywhere.

## Step 2. **Teach** New Skills by Interactive Modeling<sup>1</sup>

- Read and pretend play together.
- Ask your child what they notice when they see the letters in their name. You might trace the first letter with your finger to draw attention to it, and say, *"I notice that you are looking at the first letter. That is your letter 'S.' It is the tallest letter in your name and it wiggles back and forth like this (tracing it again). Would you like to put your finger on it and see how it wiggles?"* You might even name what expressions and body language you notice. *"I see that you smile when you trace your letter 'S.' That letter is special because it is the first letter in your name."*
- If your child is feeling unsure about letters or sounds, ask them to describe their emotions and then step back for a bit and return to talking, singing, and reading books together. If your child is getting frustrated, then you may be pushing reading too quickly for their developmental level.
- Check out storytimes or other activities for children at your local library.
- Share your thoughts and feelings. 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 together with you. Sometimes you pick them, and sometimes I pick them. My favorite times are when we dance while we are singing!"*
- Talk aloud about the ways in which you respond to your own big feelings: *"That story made me feel happy. I wanted to clap my hands."*
- Grow a love of playing with language and stories. *"I don't like the ending of that story because it makes me wonder what would happen next. Do you ever wonder about what would happen next? We should put on a play to act out a different ending."*

## Step 3. **Practice** to Grow Skills and Develop Habits

- Keep books within reach so your child can enjoy them when they choose.
- Use books, songs, rhymes, and games at home that give children a chance to see examples of language and sounds all around them.
- Use your child's dolls or stuffed animals to act out moments of enjoying language and reading: *"Does the doll have any questions about the story? What do you think the doll's questions are?"*
- Notice and acknowledge when your child recognizes logos, signs, symbols, letters, and numbers when you are out and about. You can play the license plate game, where your child points out different letters on license plates as you drive.
- 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 if they would like to tell the story to you. Since they have so much experience with the book, they will not need to read the words to be able to tell the story and turn the pages as they go. Make sure it is a book they know well so this can feel like a successful experience.

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

- Recognize effort by using "I notice..." statements like: *"I noticed how you were singing when you were playing. I love hearing that."*
- On days with extra challenges when you can see your child is not interested in talking or reading as much, that's OK. Don't let reading become a chore.
- Actively reflect on how your child is feeling when playing with language and words together. You can offer reflections like:
  - *"I notice you make the letter sounds every time they come up in the song. That is my favorite part too, because it is so silly."*
  - Build reading and songs into your daily routines and comment on how important those parts of your routines are. *"I noticed you like to sing songs when you are getting ready for bed. I love hearing you sing."*

## Step 5. **Recognize** Effort and Quality to Foster Motivation

- Recognize and call out when it is going well. *"I notice that you follow along when we move our bodies to the music. Great!"*
- Recognize small steps along the way.
- Build celebrations into your routine. Notice when your child tries something new, for example.

## References

1. Office of Child Development, University of Pittsburgh. *Reading 1: Preparing for reading.*

Retrieved on April 20, 2020 at

[https://www.oed.pitt.edu/sites/default/files/Parent\\_Guides/Updated-Parenting-Guides/Reading%20Parent%20Guide.pdf](https://www.oed.pitt.edu/sites/default/files/Parent_Guides/Updated-Parenting-Guides/Reading%20Parent%20Guide.pdf).

Recommended Citation: Center for Health and Safety Culture. (2020). *Reading Summary. Ages 3-4*. Retrieved from <https://www.ParentingMontana.org>.



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