

PARENTING TIPS FROM THE PAST 25 YEARS

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Special Issue

FEATURING GET READY FOR SUMMER CAMP! | TIMELESS BITS OF PARENTING WISDOM
THE ABCS OF READING | RAISE NATURALLY HEALTHY KIDS | START A SUMMER FIELD TRIP CLUB



By Melissa Taylor

The ABCs of Reading

Ideas to instill a love of reading

No matter what the age of your child, it's never too soon to make reading a significant part of your habits and home. You already know how important it is to read to your child. But, what else can you do to encourage him to become a reader? Here are a few ideas:

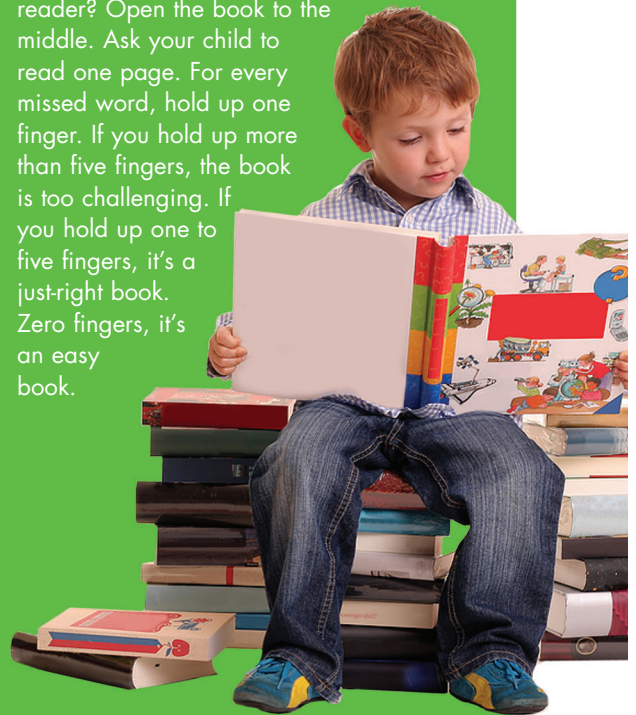
READING ACTIVITIES

Early Readers Ages 0 - 5

- **Talk and listen to your child.** The amount of vocabulary a child knows by age four predicts his or her reading success. So, all you need to do is have conversations with your child. Even babies.
- **Have fun with books.** Buy, collect, read, browse, play with, and create books. Starting when they are babies let your kids play with, chew on, and look at books. Read books aloud to your children. Build castles with books. Make your own books. Let your child find new books at yard sales, libraries and bookstores.
- **Learn the alphabet.** Sing the alphabet song. Go on alphabet walks in your neighborhood. Make crayon rubbings of letters on signs. Read or make your own alphabet book. Play "What starts with . . . ?" games.
- **Rhymers are readers.** Play "What rhymes with . . . ?" Learn nursery rhymes. Sing rhyming songs. Read books with rhymes.
- **"Pretend Read."** Parents wonder if it's okay that their children memorize a book. It's very okay—in fact, it's good. Encourage this "pretend reading" as it helps your child prepare for a reading life.
- **Make photo storybooks.** Take photographs of an activity or event. Put the photographs into a homemade book. Have your child help you retell what happened. Write it down and reread.
- **Read the pictures in a wordless picture book.** You can show your child how to use the pictures to tell a story. Then, have your child try it.

THE FIVE FINGER TEST

How do you know if a book is right for your reader? Open the book to the middle. Ask your child to read one page. For every missed word, hold up one finger. If you hold up more than five fingers, the book is too challenging. If you hold up one to five fingers, it's a just-right book. Zero fingers, it's an easy book.



- **Connect reading to writing.** Write notes and read them to your child. Encourage your child to write and read his or her own writing.
- **Provide easy access to writing supplies,** such as pencils, markers and paper.

Developing Readers Ages 6 - 9

- **Give them a choice.** Choice gives kids important ownership and motivation when they read. Allow your child to select his own book. Help her to learn how to choose wisely. Use the "5 Finger Test" to determine if the book is "just-right" for him. (See sidebar.)
- **Read in bed.** Let your child read in bed with a headlamp, even stay up late for a treat to make reading extra exciting.

ABCS OF BOOKS AND STORAGE

It's no surprise that readers need books. So, if you want a reader, make sure you have plenty of books in your house. Not just books though; include a variety of printed text such as picture books, non-fiction books, poetry books, board books, magazines, graphic novels (comic books), newspapers, brochures, menus, and letters.

Then, make a special place for your child to store his or her books. Consider baskets, plastic tubs or bookshelves that will be easily accessible place for your child to reach and organize his or her own books.

READING HABITS

Develop good reading habits now to set your child on a path to a lifelong love of reading.

Every Day

- **Read books aloud to your child.** Always read at bedtime and also throughout the day. Squirmy kids do well if you read to them while they're eating snacks or meals. Read the title and author first. Then read the book with inflection. Talk about what you think might happen next. Retell the story.

- **Limit television.**

- **Be a Reader.** Let your kids see you reading the newspaper, books and magazines. Show that reading matters in daily life.

Every Week

- **Visit the library.** Choose new books. Listen to story time. Consider allowing older children to have their own library card.

Every Month

- **Add to your book collection every month.** Use bookstore trips as rewards. Order inexpensive books from school book orders. Visit book signings at local bookstores.

If you want more ideas, don't forget to chat with the librarian, visit a bookstore or follow a reading blog for new ideas every week. Today, pick something new and fun to do with your young reader. Give it a try and see if it can become a habit. ♦

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