

BUILDING READERS®

How Families Can Help Children Get Ready to Read

Abbeville County Schools

Valentine's Day offers creative ways for your child to learn about language

Fill your child's Valentine's Day with some literacy fun! Most preschoolers enjoy this holiday—and it's a terrific opportunity to nurture your child's language learning.

Try these two kid-friendly activities:

- 1. Heart ABCs.** Cut several hearts out of construction paper. Help your child write a different letter of the alphabet on each one. Together, use the hearts to spell out short words.
- 2. Broken heart puzzles.** Cut five hearts out of paper. Write a short word on the left-hand side of each heart, and draw a picture of that word on the right-hand side. Cut the hearts in half and mix them up. Can your child mend the hearts by matching each word with the correct picture?



Solve vision issues that hinder reading

As you help your child get ready to read, don't overlook an essential factor: eyesight. According to the American Optometric Association, over 10 million school children suffer from undetected vision problems.

It's important to have your child's vision screened regularly—and to be on the lookout for warning signs of problems. Children may have vision problems if they:

- **Hold books close** to their face.
- **Squint**, cover one eye or tilt their head while looking at books.
- **Frequently trip** or bump into things.
- **Regularly complain** of headaches.

If your child shows any of these signs, make an appointment with your pediatrician. Get those eyes checked, and your child will be back on the road to reading!

Keep track of accomplishments with a birthday book

Birthdays are the perfect time to remind children of everything they've achieved. Record things your child has learned during the past year in a Things-I-Know Book.

Perhaps your child learned to jump rope, recognize certain words and set the table. On each birthday, update the book and review past entries together.



Get a feel for letters

Make learning the alphabet a tactile experience. Using the sense of touch in addition to vision can help your child understand how each letter is formed.

Have your child run a finger over letters that you have:

- **Cut out of sandpaper.**
- **Formed out of yarn.**
- **Traced in glue** and sprinkled with glitter.



Surprise your child at story time

Reading aloud can get repetitive. But if you're bored, your child will be able to hear it in your voice. So keep it interesting for both of you!

To surprise your child during story time:

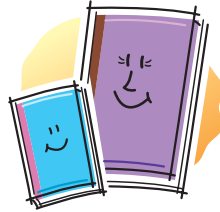
- **Use an unexpected voice.** Who says the Big Bad Wolf has to sound mean? What if he had a squeaky voice—or the hiccups?
- **Add a soundtrack.** Reading a fast-paced tale? Jazz it up with some lively background music.



‘Finger plays’ build important school skills

Finger plays are short rhymes or songs that include finger motions. Not only are finger plays fun to do, they also help preschoolers’ development in numerous ways. Finger plays:

- **Strengthen fine motor skills.** Children have many small muscles in their fingers, and developing them helps with writing as well as daily tasks, such as tying shoes.
- **Build listening skills.** Some finger plays require actions, such as clapping on certain words. Your child will need to practice listening for those words.
- **Boost cognitive development.** Learning and predicting the next movement in finger plays stimulates brain growth.



Some common finger plays that your child may enjoy include: *Five Little Monkeys*, *Here Is the Beehive* and *This Little Piggy*.

Source: K. Moyses, “Fingerplays and songs encourage development in young children,” Michigan State University.

Give your child’s literacy skills a morning boost

What’s colorful, inexpensive and a great tool for beginning readers? A cereal box!

At breakfast, see if your preschooler can identify any of the letters on the back of the box. Point out the letters in your child’s name, too. Do this often and you’ll build a reader in no time.



Thinking skills support your preschooler’s emerging reading skills

To become successful readers, preschoolers must have strong thinking skills—something children can develop through practice. To strengthen thinking skills:

- **Ask your child** to retell stories or to make up stories about something.
- **Practice sequencing.** Ask your child to tell you what happened first, second, etc. in a story.
- **Encourage your child** to compare the book you just read to others you have read together.
- **Ask for your child’s thoughts** about books—including predictions, favorite moments and characters.



Books to delight your early reader

- ***Llama Llama Home With Mama*** by Anna Dewdney. No school today for little Llama—he’s too sneezy! But what happens at lunchtime when Mama says, “Ah-choo”? Uh, oh!
- ***The Dot*** by Peter H. Reynolds. Vashti can’t figure out what to draw during art class, so she puts a dot on the paper. When the teacher tells her to sign the page, the dot is transformed into a work of art.
- ***When Randolph Turned Rotten*** by Charise Mericle Harper. Randolph and Ivy are best friends who do everything together. But Randolph isn’t happy when Ivy gets invited to an all-girls sleepover party, so he devises a plan.



Q: My preschooler doesn’t seem to like story time. Every time I sit down with a book, my child just gets up and wanders off. How can I spark an interest in books?

A: Instead of choosing books *for your child*, have your child choose books *for you*. Say “I don’t know what to read to myself for story time. Can you find a book I will like?” Then, eagerly read aloud whatever your child brings you, but don’t ask your child to stay and listen. Chances are, curiosity will get the best of your child and you won’t have to!

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