

BUILDING READERS®

How Families Can Help Children Get Ready to Read

Abbeville County Schools

Practicing the alphabet is fun with these letter-learning activities

If you are looking for creative ways to review the alphabet with your preschooler, here are some ideas to try:

- **Make alphabet cookies.** Help your child use alphabet cookie cutters and dough to cut out yummy letters. No alphabet cutters? You can carve out simple letters with a blunt plastic knife.
- **Use food coloring outdoors.** Fill a squirt bottle with water and add a few drops of food coloring. Your child can use the squirt bottle to practice writing letters on the sidewalk.
- **Create alphabet collages.** Have your child choose a letter. Then, look through magazines and catalogs together to find pictures of things that start with the letter. Help your child cut them out and glue them onto a piece of paper.



Celebrate Earth Day

Earth Day is April 22, so this month is the perfect time to read about caring for the Earth with your preschooler. Here are a few books to get your started:

- *If You Come to Earth* by Sophie Blackall.
- *Thank You, Earth: A Love Letter to Our Planet* by April Pulley Sayre.
- *Alba and the Ocean Cleanup* by Lara Hawthorne.



Read a wide variety of books

Reading different types of books provides more opportunities for your child to learn. Try:

- **Stories** with catchy rhymes and rhythms. Your child will pick up on the sounds that make up words.
- **Wordless books.** Not only are they nice to look at, they also encourage children to use their own words to tell stories that accompany the pictures.



It's time to get ready for kindergarten

Is your child graduating from preschool this spring and heading to kindergarten in the fall? If so, ask preschool teachers for advice on making a smooth transition.

Along with letting you know what you and your preschooler can expect in kindergarten, the teacher can offer insight on:

- **Your child's strengths and weaknesses.** Has your preschooler mastered the ABCs? Does your child struggle to remember the sounds letters make? Find out which skills you should work on together over the summer.
- **Reliable reading-readiness activities.** What are the teacher's go-to games, activities and websites for keeping children engaged and learning? Ask! Then mix some of them into your child's regular activities.

Foster a love of reading

Even though your child may not be reading yet, it's important to encourage an interest in reading. Here are four simple ways to do just that:

- **Visit the library** as a family often.
- **Read to your child** every day.
- **Let your child pick** the books you read.
- **Set an example.** Talk about some of the books you enjoy reading, both together and on your own.



Weave literacy activities into daily errands

There are many ways to turn regular errands into enjoyable learning experiences for your preschooler. For example, when you go grocery shopping together, have your child:

- **Help you find the items** that you need. For example, you can tell your child that you need a certain brand, and to look for the first letter of the brand's name. Put your child in charge of crossing items off your list, too.
- **Sort items in your cart** by their beginning sound. Your child may put bread and bananas together, and the carrots, crackers and cucumbers near each other.
- **Tell a grocery store tale.** Begin the story by setting a scene: "Once upon a time, there was a dragon." Then, take turns adding to the story. The catch: Each addition to the story must include something you see at the grocery store.



Let your child choose books

Boost a sense of responsibility by letting your child choose which bedtime stories to read. To help your child make a selection:

- **Designate a bedtime bookshelf.** Keep several favorites in one spot and have your child select from those.
- **Follow a theme.** One night you might decide on spaceships; another night it might be spring-time. Have your child look for books that fit the theme.

Boost reading readiness with music

In addition to stimulating the brain, music can help young children have fun with words and sounds—which is integral to reading development. To use music to enhance reading skills:

- **Sing songs** and recite nursery rhymes together.
- **Listen to children's music**, especially from movies that your child knows, and sing along!
- **Make up silly songs** and rhymes together.
- **Turn the spelling** of your child's name into a song (singing M-A-D-E-L-Y-N to the tune of "London Bridge Is Falling Down," for example).
- **Let your child** make music using everyday objects such as pots and pans.



Books to delight your early reader

- *What Waking Dragons* by Jane Yolen. A young knight must do everything to get the family dragons up and ready—from brushing their teeth to feeding them breakfast.
- *Can We Help? Kids Volunteering to Help Their Communities* by George Ancona. Everyone, no matter how old or young, is able to give back to their community. This book explores ways that children are able to help out.
- *Thesaurus Rex* by Laya Steinberg. Learn lots of new words with Thesaurus Rex as he goes about his day—playing, frolicking, rollicking, frisking and romping throughout the jungle!



Q: I have a preschooler and an infant. How do I find time to read to each of them every day?

A: You don't always have to squeeze in separate story times. Instead, read together as a family! Give your preschooler the "big kid" job of choosing the books and turning the pages. Then, snuggle up together and share them with both kids at once.

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