

# BUILDING READERS®

How Families Can Help Children Get Ready to Read

Mexico Academy & Central School District

## Try four teacher tips for selecting books to read with your preschooler

Choosing the right books for your child can be overwhelming. With so many options available, how do you select stories that are engaging and age-appropriate? Here are some teacher-tested tips to help you choose enriching books:

- 1. Select books** that match your child's interests. Look for stories with interesting characters and eye-catching illustrations.
- 2. Match the story length** with your child's attention span. Consider reading two or three very short stories instead of one long one.
- 3. Don't worry** about how old the book is. A story is new to your child if you haven't read it together before.
- 4. Stop reading** if your child doesn't like the book. It's OK if you are already a few pages in. Just pick up another book and start again!



## Word games boost phonics skills

Learning to recognize letters and the sounds they make can be a fun experience for young children. These playful activities will spark your preschooler's interest in language and strengthen phonics skills:

- **Same or Different?** Name two words and ask your child whether they start with the same sound or with a different sound. For instance, say, "*Pie* and *potato*." See if your preschooler recognizes that both words begin with the *ppp* sound.
- **Word Circle.** Show your preschooler an easy, common word (such as *and* or *to*). Select a piece of junk mail or a short article and challenge your preschooler to find and circle the word each time it appears.

## Create a writer's toolbox

Boost excitement about writing—even before your child begins putting words together. Help your child:

- 1. Decorate a shoebox** to turn it into a writer's toolbox.
- 2. Fill the box** with paper, pencils, crayons and other writing supplies.
- 3. Use the toolbox** when drawing pictures, writing notes or just scribbling.

In addition to making writing fun, these activities help your child build the small motor skills needed for writing.



## Engage your child in story time

When you read aloud, encourage your child to turn the pages of the book. This simple act strengthens your emerging reader's attention span. Your child will need to pay close attention to your verbal cues and pauses to figure out when to flip each page!



## Celebrate National Poetry Month

April is National Poetry Month, a great time to read poems with your child. Check out a book of silly poems from the library by poets such as Shel Silverstein or Jack Prelutsky.

When reading together, point out the patterns and rhymes within the text. This helps your preschooler learn about letter sounds and encourages predicting, both important reading readiness skills.



## Share many different types of writing

Children can develop a love of reading from an early age. By surrounding your child with a variety of books, you can broaden background knowledge and foster a lifelong passion for learning.

Explore different book types and genres, such as:

- **Concept books** that teach about subjects like counting, colors, shapes and the alphabet.
- **Nonfiction books** that aim to inform, educate and explain real-world subjects.
- **Rhyming stories** with distinguishable patterns and repetition.
- **Simple stories** with predictable plots.
- **Wordless picture books** where your child will be able to follow the plot and supply the words independently.
- **Books of nursery rhymes** and song lyrics.
- **Touch-and-feel books** that engage multiple senses.



## Have fun with finger puppets

Make reading time special by using puppets to represent the characters in your child's favorite stories.

Here's how:

1. **Cut several small rectangles** out of construction paper—one for each character.
2. **Help your child** draw a face on each puppet.
3. **Tape a loop** that will fit around your child's finger on the back of each puppet.
4. **Use the puppets** to act out the stories you read together.



## Try nature-inspired language learning

Now that the weather is starting to get warmer, it's time to take language learning outside. Here are three fresh-air activities to try with your preschooler:

1. **Read outside.** Grab a blanket and a stack of books and have a story picnic with your child. The change of scenery can make reading more fun!
2. **Fill a nature jar.** Take a walk outside and gather leaves, rocks, flower petals, etc. At home, have your child put the treasures in a box. Later, ask your child to use the items to retell the story of your walk.
3. **Learn about plants.** Check out a book from the library about how plants grow from seeds. Read and learn about what plants need to grow.



## Books to delight your early reader

- ***Maybe a Bear Ate It!*** by Robie H. Harris. What happened to a young cat's favorite book? He can't find it anywhere. A bear must have eaten it—or maybe a stegosaurus stomped on it!
- ***A Leaf Can Be...*** by Laura Purdie Salas. A leaf is more than just a leaf. It can also be a shade spiller, an air cleaner, a fine healer and so much more. This beautifully illustrated book explores the many functions leaves can have.
- ***Please, Mr. Panda*** by Steve Antony. Mr. Panda sets out to share his box of doughnuts—but only with a well-mannered friend.



**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 for your children. Instead, read together as a family! Give your preschooler the "big kid" job of choosing which books to read. Then, snuggle up and share them with both of your children at once. You will be fostering a love of reading and create lasting memories.

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Publisher: Doris McLaughlin.

Publisher Emeritus: John H. Wherry, Ed.D.

Editor: Rebecca Hasty Miyares.

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