

BUILDING READERS®

How Families Can Help Children Get Ready to Read

Mexico Academy & Central School District

Read-alouds strengthen reading readiness and other essential school skills

Reading aloud is a proven way to ignite your preschooler's imagination, spark a love of learning, and lay the foundation for reading success. When you read to your child, you:

- **Strengthen phonological awareness.** Reading aloud helps your child develop a sense of the sounds that make up words, which is key for learning to read.
- **Spark creativity.** Ask your child to imagine what characters might do.
- **Boost listening skills.**
- **Expand knowledge.** This background knowledge provides context that helps your child read and learn new things.
- **Build vocabulary.**
- **Nurture thinking skills** when you talk about what is happening in the story.
- **Teach appreciation** and love for books and stories.



Bolster your child's visual memory

Reading to learn means remembering what you've read. This can be difficult for many young children; however, memory skills can be developed—especially before age six.

Here's a fun memory game to try with your child:

1. **Select a detailed illustration** from one of your child's picture books.
2. **Show your child the picture** for a brief moment.
3. **Ask simple questions** to see what your child remembers.
"What color was the cat?" "How many people did you see?"

As your child's memory improves, try decreasing the amount of time your child looks at a picture. Then, when you read, encourage your child to create mental pictures of the story.

Celebrate reading experiences

Help your child celebrate reading accomplishments by making a reading tree. Together:

1. **Cut the shape of a tree** out of brown paper. Hang it in a visible spot.
2. **Add a leaf** to the tree for every new book you read together. Write the title on the leaf.
3. **Vary the leaf color** each month so you can see how many books you and your child read in a month.



Interact during reading time

Story time doesn't have to be a passive experience. Encourage your preschooler to become an active participant by acting out the story as you read.

This approach will keep your child engaged, boost comprehension and enhance the overall learning experience.



Strengthen language skills

To cultivate a love of language and strengthen vocabulary, introduce your child to a broad range of words and phrases. You can:

- **Invent silly words** and stories together.
- **Encourage your child** to speak in complete sentences.
- **Ask about what** your child is learning in preschool.
- **Read stories** and books on a wide variety of topics.



Music and literacy go hand in hand

Music is a fun, free and effective teaching tool. And you don't need to be a world-class musician in order to help your child benefit from it. Hearing lots of different music enhances your child's language learning in several areas:

- **Vocabulary.** From "Mary Had a Little Lamb" to "Three Blind Mice," songs introduce children to new words.
- **Communication.** Music promotes both emotional well-being and self-expression.
- **Creativity.** Music provides an outlet for your child's imaginative side. Choose a favorite tune and invent new lyrics for it together.
- **Literacy.** Research suggests that listening to the patterns in music can improve children's early literacy skills.



Source: K. DeSousa, "How music education sharpens the brain, tunes us up for life," EdSource.

Any time can be reading time!

Reading time does not have to follow a strict schedule—you and your child can share a book any time of the day. To fill your child's day with reading:

- **Say yes** as often as possible when your child asks you to sit down and read.
- **Read at different times** of day. Your child's preferred reading time may change with age.
- **Pick up books** when you're both relaxed and just start reading.



Trade stories with your preschooler

Do you sit at your child's bedside at night and chat about your day? Well, guess what? You're not just sharing a cozy moment together, you're storytelling.

That's a wonderful thing to do, because storytelling:

- **Gives structure to experiences.** Each time you recount something that happened—or encourage your child to recount something—you're giving that memory a framework. Just like in books, the stories you tell should have a beginning, middle and end.
- **Develops your child's ear** for language. Every new phrase you use while speaking is another "language-learning nugget" for your preschooler to draw upon later.



Books to delight your early reader

- ***A Squiggly Story*** by Andrew Larsen. A boy wants to write a story—but he doesn't know where to start. He looks to his sister for help, and she tells him that each story starts with a single letter.
- ***Grumpy Gloria*** by Anna Dewdney. Gloria the dog is in a horrible mood. Her owners try everything they can think of to cheer up their pouting pup.
- ***I Can Be Anything*** by Jerry Spinelli. One little boy dreams of being so many things when he grows up, from a joke teller to a pumpkin farmer. This book will show kids that their futures hold endless possibilities.



Q: My child loves learning new words. How can I introduce words and their meanings without drilling my child?

A: You can incorporate vocabulary by building into everyday activities. When you're driving in the car, point out words on billboards and street signs. If you're at the doctor's office, read the signs you see posted around you. At home, skim the news articles for new words to share with your child. You can also read product labels from the foods you eat.

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