



RAISING A READER

A guide to helping your child become a good reader

HOW CAN I RAISE A READER?

Your child, like most children, will learn how to read. Whether a child reads and reads fluently depends partly on you. Children who read well come from homes in which there are plenty of books, magazines, and newspapers, and where everyone reads – parents, brothers and sisters. Their parents encourage reading and make time for it. Clearly the family enjoys reading.

The first step

If you want your child to read well and to read with understanding – to get “hooked on books” – begin early to lay the right foundation.

You need not be a professional teacher yourself. You do need to care and to take every opportunity to help your child learn about the written language.



INFLUENCES

Certain things influence children's success and interest in reading. They are:

Wide knowledge

The more knowledge children acquire at home the greater their chances to become successful readers. Children who go on trips, walk in parks, and visit museums and zoos get good background knowledge for school reading.

Thoughtful talking

The way in which you talk to your child about things makes a big difference. Talking can increase a child's supply of concepts and vocabulary. It's not enough to ask a question: *"What do you think is under the windshield wiper?"* Ask a question that makes your child think: *"Why do you think there's a*

slip of paper under the windshield wiper?" Thought-provoking questions stimulate curiosity, which is needed for success in reading.

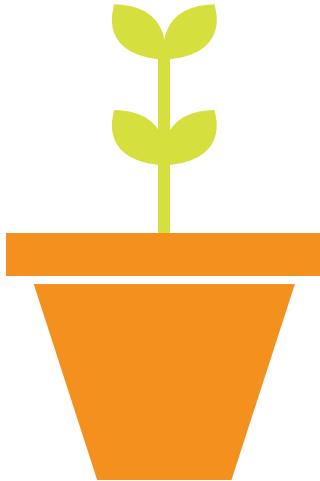
The content and style of language you use with your child will influence his or her school achievement in reading.

Talk about events. Encourage children to think about past and future events. Don't allow conversation to focus entirely on ongoing events; for example, the clothes your child is putting on or the food that is being eaten for dinner.

Ask your children to describe something in which you did not participate, such as a visit to a friend's home. This gives them a chance to use their memories, reflect on their experience, learn

to describe people and events, and tell complete stories. Children who hold lengthy conversations at home learn to reflect on experience and to construct meaning from events. This is part of their learning to read and understanding what they read. As mentioned earlier, have lots of reading materials around your home. Let your children see you reading and enjoying it.

THINGS TO DO!



Read aloud

This is the single most important thing you can do for your children. It's especially important in the pre-school years, but don't stop reading aloud to children after they learn to read. Reading aloud forms an important bond between you and your children.

When reading aloud, keep certain things in mind. For instance, pre-schoolers enjoy hearing the same story over and over again. Books that repeat phrases, such as *The Little Red Hen*, are special favorites and give very young children an opportunity to participate by reading the repetitive parts with you. This lets children know that they can read and that reading can be fun.

Begin reading to your child as soon as he or she is born. Read from simple picture books, books of poetry, even backs of cereal boxes! Books with cardboard pages are fairly easy for toddlers to turn a page and this exercise will help them learn how to take care of books.

Talk to your children about the stories you read. Help toddlers learn to identify letters and words. Talk about the meaning of words. Talk about your favorite children's books and read them aloud. Ask your children what they think about the stories and why.

Ask questions about a story that make children think. Avoid asking questions that can be answered with "yes" or "no." For instance, if you're reading a story about a dog, don't ask if your child likes dogs,

but which dogs he/she likes best and why.

Let these questions carry over to other areas of the child's life. Encourage your child to discuss daily activities. If your child spent the day with the babysitter, ask what they did and how or why they did it. Always ask questions that require children to use their memories and reflect on their experiences. Talking about experiences helps a child learn about concepts and helps build vocabulary. These abilities help your child to become a good reader.

If you're reading to an older child or to several children, consider the wonderful classics like *Charlotte's Web*, *The Secret Garden* and *Winnie-the-Pooh*.

Relate episodes in stories to real-life events

If you've been reading *Charlotte's Web*, discuss the friendship between Charlotte and Wilbur and compare it to your children's friendships.

Teach alphabet letters

It's never too soon to begin teaching a youngster the letters of the alphabet. Point out letters on signs, food cans, cereal boxes, in stories and in books. For example, when reading *The Three Bears*, point out the letter "t" in the story, then ask your child to pick out the letter "t" from alphabet blocks. And remember – all children love to find the letters in their names!

Provide a place to read

Make sure that your child has a quiet, comfortable, well-lighted

place to read or play with reading materials.

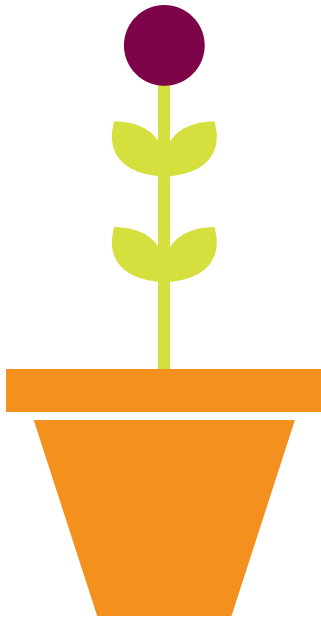
Have a variety of materials

Have plenty of paper, pencils, crayons and chalkboards for your child to use in drawing and writing. Writing helps children learn the relationships between letters and sounds. If your child is too young to write with a pencil, use magnetic boards and letters.

Visit the Library!

Make weekly trips to the Library. Show your child the wide variety of things to read: books on hobbies, animals, crafts, sports, famous people, etc. Our librarians will help you find just the right stories for your child.

MORE THINGS TO DO!



Consider using books on CD

You can borrow CDs and book/tape combinations for young children from the Library. They add variety to reading activities and help make long car trips go faster!

Supplement television

If your child likes to watch *Dora the Explorer* or *Arthur* or any other educational TV program, help relate the TV lesson to other situations. For example, if the show focuses on the letter "B," have your child give you examples of other words beginning with "B." Or, have your child show you a toy that begins with that letter, such as a ball or a bear.

Many parents worry that TV may adversely affect a child's reading skills. The American Academy of

Pediatrics recommends that parents discourage TV viewing entirely for children under age 2, and to no more than 1 or 2 hours of quality programming per day for older children.

The televised dramatization of a novel or an animated production of a favorite story may inspire a child to read the book or story. The Library also has DVDs of many classic stories.

Using computers

Most educators agree that parents need to limit the amount of time their child is on the computer. Don't let it become a babysitter! Monitor their use closely and steer their interests to creative and imaginative play.

Make a scrapbook

Encourage your child to make scrapbooks. This can help your child identify words and letters. Have a pre-schooler make an alphabet scrapbook using an old notebook or sheets of cardboard tied with a shoestring. One day your child could work on the letter "A," cutting pictures from magazines that begin with that letter: apple, airplane, automobile. The next day your child could work on "B," and so on.

An older child may enjoy keeping a scrapbook about a particular hobby, favorite singer, or sport.

Help prepare for phonics

Help prepare a young child for learning phonics (the relationship between letters and sounds), since

this is an important part of reading lessons in 1st and 2nd grade. Label objects in your child's bedroom: clock, dresser, chair, window, toys, etc., to help relate the written word to its sound. Teach rhymes and alphabet songs. Encourage tracing letters on paper.

Monitor performance

Stay interested and involved in your child's growth as a reader. Encourage him/her to read to you, and praise his or her progress. Try to give your child a feeling of confidence in his or her abilities. That's what reading is all about!

It's important to keep tabs on your children's school performance and make sure they do their homework correctly. Visit teachers and observe their classrooms periodically.

Talk about school

You can increase reading success by helping kids look forward to school as a happy place. Always talk about school in a pleasant, positive way.

Have a special reading time each day

Let your child know just how important reading is by suggesting it as a leisure-time activity, or setting aside a regular "reading time" every night, perhaps just before bedtime.

VISIT THE GRAND RAPIDS PUBLIC LIBRARY

The Grand Rapids Public Library is here to help your child! Visit any one of our eight easy locations for a wonderful selection of books, DVDs, CD-ROM software, and books-on-CD.

Talk with our librarians about your child's reading progress and ask for their suggestions of authors and good books to share with your child.



www.grpl.org

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616.988.5412

Seymour Branch

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Van Belkum Branch

1563 Plainfield NE ▪ 49505
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West Leonard Branch

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West Side Branch

713 Bridge NW ▪ 49504
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2025 Leonard NE ▪ 49505
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A service provided by the Youth Services Department of the Grand Rapids Public Library.