



# Tips for Helping Children Learn to Read



“As parents,  
the most  
important  
thing we can  
do is read to  
our children  
early and  
often. ...When  
children learn  
to love books,  
they learn to  
love learning.”

—Laura Bush

The **No Child Left Behind Act of 2001** helps to ensure that all children receive a high-quality education and holds schools responsible for making sure that all children are learning. The information in this brochure is consistent with this important law.

This brochure provides information about how you can help build your child’s reading and language skills during the early years of life. Reading well is at the heart of all learning. Without the ability to read, children can’t succeed in school.

### **Background**

Children begin to develop language skills in infancy. Whether or not English is your first language isn’t important. What’s important is talking with your child. To understand the connection between children’s early experiences with spoken language and learning to read, think of language as a four-legged stool. The four legs are talking, listening, reading and writing. All four legs are important; each helps to support and balance the other.

Research has shown that most of the reading problems faced by adolescents and adults today could have been prevented if they’d gotten the proper help during early childhood.

Aa Bb Cc Dd Ee Ff Gg Hh Ii Jj Kk Ll Mm Nn

**“Reading is more than a pastime. In today’s world, it’s a necessity.”**

### **Selecting Childcare or Schools in the Early Years**

As you choose a school or center where your child’s language and reading skills will be nurtured, look for:

- ★ Adults trained to help children learn language basics, such as letters and corresponding sounds.
- ★ Lots of appealing books.
- ★ Ample time each day for reading and language activities.
- ★ Crayons or markers and plenty of paper.
- ★ Illustrations on the walls of letters matched with words and of words matched with pictures.
- ★ An atmosphere where children enjoy learning.

### **Introducing Babies and Toddlers Birth to 2 Years To Language**

Talk to your baby or toddler often. Show him things, name them and talk about them. Encourage him to babble or try to communicate with you. Sing songs and read nursery rhymes.

Read with your baby or toddler each day, even if it’s just for a short time. Make it a special time that he enjoys.

Check at your local public library for books made especially for babies and toddlers—such as interactive books (lift-the-flap or touch-and-feel) and books made of cardboard or cloth. Encourage your child to handle the books, which will help with motor and language development.

**world, it's a survival skill."**

—Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings

## **Ideas for Helping Preschoolers Ages 3 and 4 Get Ready to Read**

Among other ideas, the following may be helpful to you:

- ★ Keep up the conversations, book-sharing and trips to the library. Look for alphabet books and books of poems and rhymes.
- ★ Point out letters and simple, familiar words in books and signs. Help your child read his name or write it with crayons or magnetic letters.
- ★ Encourage him to tell you stories, to put happenings into a logical order.
- ★ Read books and sing songs with rhymes. Play rhyming games. For instance, as you're reading or singing, stop before a rhyming word and ask your child to fill in the blank.
- ★ Check with your school district or other service providers about early childhood learning materials they may have.

## **Ideas for Kindergartners and Early First-graders Ages 5 and 6**

- ★ Join your child in simple activities that involve talking, reading or writing, such as following a recipe or writing a note.
- ★ Keep that special time each day for reading aloud together.
- ★ At the library, look for books for beginning readers and encourage your child to read to you when she's ready.

## More Ideas for All Ages

- ★ Let your child see you enjoy reading.
- ★ Limit TV viewing and computer use, and monitor what your child watches on TV and does on the computer.
- ★ For concerns about your child's development, check with your pediatrician.

## Working With Your Child's School

Children whose first language is not English can still become excellent readers in English. Whether you do the activities suggested in Spanish or in English, you are still supporting him as he learns English language and reading skills.

When your child first enters school, talk with his teacher. If you feel you need help in meeting with the teacher, ask a relative, neighbor or someone else in your community to join you.

Let the teacher know what you are doing at home to strengthen your child's speaking and reading in Spanish and English. Ask the teacher for ideas. Children who can switch back and forth between languages have accomplished something special: they understand two languages. They should be encouraged in such language learning.

## Examples of Resources

U.S. Department of Education: [www.ed.gov](http://www.ed.gov) or  
<http://www.ed.gov/espanol/bienvenidos/es/index.html?src=gu>  
or call 1-800-USA-LEARN

Bilingual information on helping children learn to read:  
[www.ColorinColorado.org](http://www.ColorinColorado.org) or [www.nifl.gov/partnershipforreading](http://www.nifl.gov/partnershipforreading)

Early childhood reading activities, bilingual:  
<http://www.ed.gov/inits/americanreads/RSRkit.html>

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