



Tips for Parents



Learning the Sounds Letters Make

- Teach your child the alphabet using alphabet songs and books. Play "I Spy":
" I spy something that begins with the letter G."
- Encourage your child to write notes, make shopping lists, and label drawings. Congratulate her on getting her message across.
- Read picture books with large letters and help your child hear the sounds the letters make by saying the beginning sound of a word and sliding a finger to the end as you blend the sounds.
- Play taped rhymes, chants, songs, poems, and stories and have your child "read" along.
- Point to a word and using prompts like "What sound do you think I'll hear at the beginning of this word? At the end?"

Developing Word Knowledge

- Point out the writing that surrounds us on street signs, on billboards, in grocery stores.
- Reread favorite books (as your child listens and follows the words, she builds her mental storehouse of sight words).
- Talk about how the same word can look different because of uppercase letters or different print styles (for example, bed, BED).
- Make labels for his environment (for example, DESK, CHAIR, DOOR, WALL, FLOOR).
- Use prompts like "Have you seen this word before?"

Developing an Ear for Syntax (the way in which words and phrases of a sentence are arranged and how they relate to each other)

- Engage your child in conversation. Children *need* to hear themselves talk. They learn the shape and form of language by speaking and listening.
- Share wordless picture books and talk about what's happening in the pictures. Two suggestions are *Good Dog, Carl* by Alexandra Day and *Tuesday* by David Wiesner
- Read a broad range of material to your child: picture books, chapter books, comics, poetry, and so on.
- Read books (picture books *and* longer books) with a lot of expression in your voice.
- Use prompts like "Did that sound right?"



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Developing a Good Understanding of Words

- Encourage your child to talk—better yet, joke—about what words mean in different contexts.
- Share how clues to a word's meaning can be found in the picture or the paragraph.
- Show how to make a best guess as to a word's meaning and then read ahead to find out if the guess was right.
- Have a box of old clothes, hats, and props your child can use to act out a favorite story.
- Start a parent-child book club. Your child can gain insight into the meaning of what was read by being part of the discussion.
- Use prompts like "Does that word make sense?" and "What do you think this word means?"

Using and Developing Background Knowledge

- Provide experiences for your child. Picnics, museums outings, visits to the library, walks around the block are anchor experiences from which he can draw as a reader.
- Help your child follow her passions. If she's into frogs, snakes, fairy tales, rock—whatever—get the books and read them to her.
- Talk with your child about his experiences and help him connect them to his reading or listening.
- Talk about your memories sparked by a book.
- Use prompts like "This is just like the time I..."
"Doesn't this remind you of ..."

Think About the Reason for Reading

- Talk about all the reasons you read (for example, to play a board game, make a cake, plan a trip, put together a toy, fix a bike, have fun).
- Encourage your child to think about why he is reading: for fun, for information, to do a school assignment, to write a paper.
- Create specific reasons to read: to build a model airplane, find information on the Internet, make brownies, be a part of a book discussion group.
- Use prompts like "I need to read this because..."