

## Helping Your Child Learn to Read: Preschool to Grade 3

When children become good readers in the early grades, they are more likely to become better learners throughout their school years and beyond. Learning to read is hard work for children. Fortunately, research is now available that suggests how to give each child a good start in reading.

Becoming a reader involves the development of important skills, including learning to:

- **use** language in conversation
- **listen** and respond to stories read aloud
  
- **recognize** and name the letters of the alphabet
- **listen** to the sounds of spoken language
- **connect** sounds to letters to figure out the "code" of reading
- **read** often so that recognizing words becomes easy and automatic
- **learn** and use new words
- **understand** what is read

Preschool and kindergarten teachers set the stage for children to learn to read with some critical early skills. First, second, and third grade teachers then take up the task of building the skills that children will use every day for the rest of their lives. Parents can also help their children become readers. Learning to read takes practice – more practice than children get during the school day.

**If your child is just beginning to learn to read, at home you can help by...**

- **Practicing the sounds of language.** Read books with rhymes. Teach your child rhymes, short poems, and songs. Play simple word games: How many words can you make up that sound like the word "bat"?
- **Helping your child take spoken words apart and put them together.** Help your child separate the sounds in words, listen for beginning and ending sounds, and put separate sounds together.
- **Practicing the alphabet by pointing out letters wherever you see them and by reading alphabet books.**

**If your child is just beginning to read, at home you can help by...**

- **Pointing out the letter-sound relationships your child is learning on labels, boxes, newspapers, magazines and signs.**
- **Listening to your child read words and books from school.** Be patient and listen as your child practices. Let your child know you are proud of his reading.

### **If your child is reading, at home you can help your child by...**

- **Rereading familiar books.** Children need practice in reading comfortably and with expression using books they know.
- **Building reading accuracy.** As your child is reading aloud, point out words he missed and help him read words correctly. If you stop to focus on a word, have your child reread the whole sentence to be sure he understands the meaning.
- **Building reading comprehension.** Talk with your child about what she is reading. Ask about new words. Talk about what happened in a story. Ask about the characters, places, and events that took place. Ask what new information she has learned from the book. Encourage her to read on her own.

### **Make reading a part of every day**

- **Share conversations with your child over meal times and other times you are together.** Children learn words more easily when they hear them spoken often. Introduce new and interesting words at every opportunity.
- **Read together every day.** Spend time talking about stories, pictures, and words.
- **Be your child's best advocate.** Keep informed about your child's progress in reading and ask the teacher about ways you can help.
- **Be a reader and a writer.** Children learn habits from the people around them.
- **Visit the library often.** Story times, computers, homework help, and other exciting activities await the entire family.

*Adapted from "Put Reading First: Helping Your Child Learn to Read", originally published by The Partnership for Reading, a collaborative effort of the National Institute for Literacy (NIFL), the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD), and the U.S. Department of Education.*