

What Can I Do To Promote Literacy?

You can play a big role in helping your child learn to read, write, speak, and listen well. The results will pay off for years to come. Helping your child learn these skills can bring you and your child closer together – plus it can be rewarding and fun.

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Talk and sing with your child

- Infants learn to talk by hearing people talk to them. They are communicating with you from the very beginning. Communication with your infant can be a part of everyday activities. For example, talk with him as you are feeding, dressing, and bathing him.
- When your child gets older and starts to point to things and ask questions, answer them all in clear, simple language. Listen and respond in a way that shows you are truly interested in what she has to say.

Read to your child everyday

- Begin reading to your child in infancy. Even if a baby doesn't understand the words you use, she feels the connection with you.
- Carry books with you when you go out.
- When reading to your preschooler, point out letters and words in the book.
- Pay attention to your child to see when he has had enough.

Provide materials that prepare your child for writing

- Babies start to develop the hand and finger muscles they need for writing by holding toys.
- Provide arts and crafts materials such as markers and playdough that help develop writing skills.
- Teach by example by letting your child see you writing recipes, grocery lists, things to do, and letters to friends.

Provide opportunities for play and exploration

- Materials that involve matching, sorting, and ordering by shape and color all support reading and writing skills.
- As your child grows older, involve him in activities that you do around the house. When you cook, let your child help you read the recipe and stir the ingredients. When you fold the

laundry, your child can help while you talk about the size, shapes, and color of the clothing.

Be a role model by showing your love of reading

- The best way to express the importance of reading to your child is to demonstrate your own love of reading. Spend quiet time in which your child observes you reading.

Visit libraries and bookstores

- Visit the library regularly in order to spark your child's interest in books.

Give your child a healthy start

- A healthy start begins with quality prenatal care. After your child is born, ask a health care professional about proper immunization, nutrition, and safety for your baby. Early screening to detect vision or hearing problems is also critical, since these problems can seriously affect a child's ability to hear and learn language.

Select quality child care

- Quality child care can be a place to prepare your child for reading, so spend time with providers and ask questions about the children's activities throughout the day.
- Don't be impressed by a center that says they teach 3-year-olds to read. Do be impressed if you are told that there are many activities that prepare children for reading and writing. Look for a provider that emphasizes communication and a 'hands-on' approach.

Instill a lifelong love of reading

- Parents can instill a love of reading in their children by fostering their literacy growth through everyday activities – not by teaching them to read from an early age.
- A lifelong love of reading begins with children wanting to be read to and parents reading to them; children will soon be spending quiet time reading books on their own.

