

Build Successful Readers: Strategies for Parents

The love of reading begins at home. As parents, you play a vital role in your child's reading development.

Here, you'll find ideas and activities you can use to nurture children's love of reading, preparing them for success in school and beyond.

1. Read to and with your child every day.

By far, this is the most important thing you can do to promote a love of reading. Reading aloud to a young child, even before a baby can hold a book, stimulates the child's mind and helps to build an appreciation for books. Reading to children before they start school will improve their vocabulary and prepare them for learning to read on their own.

Try to read to your child for 30 minutes each day. If that is not possible, remember that five minutes a day is better than none.

For emerging readers, you may want to read several words while your child follows along, supplying the next word. Ask your child to find letters and words on the page. When your young reader has gained enough skill, invite your child to read with you. Play a game by alternating sentences—you read one sentence and your child reads the next.

When you are unable to read to your child, ask grandparents, neighbors, babysitters, siblings, and other caregivers to step in and serve as the designated reader for the day. Besides increasing skills and appreciation for books, these reading sessions will create memories that will last a lifetime.

2. Make reading meaningful.

Show your emerging reader how reading and writing help you get things done every day—cooking, shopping, driving, and so on. Teach your child simple words that appear often in daily life, such as “stop,” “exit,” “walk,” and “bus.” Once your young reader sees the connection between reading and daily tasks, your child will come to understand the importance of learning to read.



3. Dedicate time to read as a family.

Set aside time at home to read and share stories. Family reading provides valuable practice and reinforces the importance of reading well.

4. Show your child how much you love to read.

Model your own interest in reading by reading in front of your child often. Let your emerging reader see you read for pleasure, and encourage your child to do the same. Suggest reading as a free-time activity, and make sure your child has time to read every day.

5. Set up a reading area in your home.

Put books your child enjoys in a single location where they can be easily accessed—such as a bookshelf in a bedroom. Choose a quiet, well-lit place, and equip it with a comfortable chair and anything else your young reader may need. As your child's reading skills improve, add more challenging books to the collection.



6. Let your child choose the books of interest.

By allowing your child to select books, you are empowering your emerging reader to take charge of learning. Your child will feel active and involved, increasing excitement and adding to the fun of reading.

7. Pair books with activities your child enjoys.

Encourage your child to read books about favorite activities. You may also combine those activities with books on the subject. For example, if you're planning to spend a day at the beach, suggest your child read a story about the ocean. Discuss the book as you travel to and from the activity. On the way home, discuss how the beach met—or didn't meet—expectations from the book.

8. Visit the library often.

Take your child on trips to the library and build excitement about borrowing books. Make getting your child's first library card a special event.

9. Revisit the books you loved as a child.

Introduce your child to some of your favorite childhood books. Borrow them from the library and read them together. Ask your child to pick out a favorite book so you can read it. Then discuss it together.

10. Practice writing with letters to family members.

Encourage your child to write notes to grandparents and other relatives. Ask the family members to write back. Doing so will not only improve your child's reading and writing skills, but bring your family closer together, as well.

11. End every day with a bedtime story.

Establish a bedtime ritual that includes reading aloud to your child. As bedtime approaches, model your excitement for reading by talking with your child about how you can't wait to find out what happens in the next chapter, and discuss what each of you thinks will happen next. In addition to helping your child gain an appreciation for good stories, this routine will give you and your child more quality time together.

12. Celebrate your child's success.

Celebrate when your child finishes new or challenging books. Take your young reader out for a treat, get more books, or rent a movie adaptation of the book, if one is available. Compare the story told in the movie to the original story in the book.