

Make Reading Part of Your Preschooler's Everyday Life

Do you enjoy reading? Do you look at the newspaper? Read magazines? Go to the library? Chances are, if you do any of these activities, your preschool child is on his way to becoming a reader.

The process of learning to read is complex. While there is a lot of information about this process, one of the most important things to know is that parents help their children learn to read as they go about the routines of everyday life.

The basics of learning to read are talking, listening, reading and writing. As children have conversations with caring adults, they hear both new and familiar words and their vocabulary grows.

Opportunities for adults and children to talk together happen during daily routines such as riding in the car or bus, doing household chores like fixing dinner and folding laundry, or bathing and getting ready for bed.

A major part of conversation is listening. When children talk, adults listen and respond. Then children listen and respond, and so the flow of conversation happens.

Remember snuggling with a favorite adult as he or she read aloud or told you stories? Have you watched your preschooler "pretend" to read to his favorite teddy bear or younger sibling? Have you read his favorite story over and over and over again? These experiences tell children that reading is fun. And when things are fun, they are repeated.

During these reading experiences, children become familiar with many elements of print, such as words and the symbols (letters) that go together to make words.

As your child sees letters, she begins to connect them to familiar words, especially the letters that make up her name. It is a natural next step for her to want to write those letters.

Children will copy the actions of the adults who are important to them. When they see parents make a grocery list, they want to use pencil and paper to make their own list. A simple way to encourage these beginning writing activities is to have pencils, markers, crayons and scrap paper available for your child to use.

The more children get to practice behaviors connected with talking, listening, reading and writing, the easier it is for them to become enthusiastic readers. While you as a parent have a big influence on these early literacy behaviors, it is important to remember that opportunities for literacy experiences occur while you and your child share in the basic routines of everyday life.