



**FAMILY AND
CONSUMER SCIENCES**
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Raising a Reader

Educators used to think that children begin learning to read and write when they start school. Now, however, research has shown that learning to read and write begins long before.

Though pointing at pictures, making sounds, scribbling and telling stories may not seem that significant, these activities – and others like them – prepare children to read and write. As a child's first and most important teachers, parents can do small things every day that will make a big difference as children learn to read and write.

Teach about books and print. Show your child what books are for and how to use them. Point to the words as you read so your child learns the difference between pictures and words, and sees that print moves from left to right and top to bottom. Make books at home with old photos, your child's drawings or pictures from magazines. Put together a page for every letter in the alphabet or hour in your child's day to create a book that is special to him/her!

Read to your child. Make time to read with your child for at least 20 minutes every day. Let your child pick the stories and ask questions along the way. Read picture books, board books, story books, alphabet books, or even magazines and catalogs. It doesn't matter what you read, as long as there are words and you and your child are enjoying yourselves!

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FAMILY AND CONSUMER SCIENCES

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Family and Consumer Sciences (FCS) program staff at MSU Extension can answer questions or help you learn more about money management, parent, food, nutrition and health issues. MSU Extension educators integrate university and community resources to provide tools that help families succeed. For more information on FCS programs in Michigan, call your county MSU Extension office. Check the government pages of your phone book for contact information.

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Talk and listen – a lot. Your child learns new words by talking, listening, singing, playing and observing the world around him/her. The more words your child knows, the better it is when he/she learns to read. You can help by teaching new words every chance you get. Explain that a kiwi is a fruit or what the word “delicate” means. Use a lot of descriptive words when you talk, such as sunny day, scratchy beard or foggy weather. Also, talk throughout your day about what you are doing and the things you see and hear. This helps your child connect words with objects and actions, and increases his/her vocabulary.

Teach the abc’s. Singing the ABC song and reading alphabet stories are a great start to learning about letters. But don’t forget about using their names to teach about letters, too. The first letter most children learn is the first letter of their first names. Show your child what his/her name looks like, and say each of the letters out loud. You can also begin to point out words and letters any time you see them – on signs, in books, in newspapers, on clothes or on food packages. Be sure to talk about the sounds the letters make, too. Before your child can read and write, he/she needs to know each of the letters and their sounds.

Teach about sounds. One of the best ways to learn about sounds is by teaching your child songs, stories and finger plays that rhyme. Simple ones such as “Twinkle Twinkle Little Star” and “Where is Thumbkin?” are easy to learn and teach rhyming skills. Rhyming games help children learn about the sounds at the beginning, in the middle and at the end of words, which is an important skill for reading. Play other word games, too. Say a word and ask your child to think of all the words that rhyme with it, or make an alphabet sound and have your child make a list of all the words he/she knows with that sound.

It doesn’t take a lot of time or energy to help a child get a good start on reading. Simple, fun activities like these will help children get ready to read and write before they go to school.

For more information on these and other parenting, family, food, nutrition, health, and money management topics, contact the MSU Extension office. MSU Extension Family and Consumer Sciences educators are located in all 83 Michigan counties to integrate university and community resources to help families succeed.

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