



# Parents Make the Connection



Who are a child's first and most important teachers?



**You.** Parents help their young children be ready to learn when they go to school.

## Ready to Read

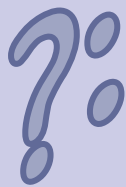
Research shows that reading is the basis for success in school, and success in school increases the likelihood of positive outcomes later in life while reducing the likelihood that a child will engage in risk behaviors, like drug use.

Learning to read, however, doesn't start when a child enters school. It begins at birth, when a child's brain starts to grow. 90% of brain growth happens during the first three years of life! What parents do in the first few years helps determine how well a child will do in school.

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## Here are three ways to help your children get ready to read:

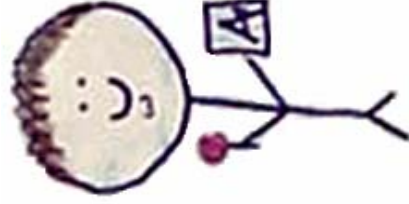
### 1. Read to your children every day.



Children need to hear a thousand stories before they learn to read. Reading introduces new ideas and words, such as “skyscraper” or “zebra.” Make reading together a fun and loving time for you to share the joy of books. Look at the pictures together and ask your children questions that make them think and talk with you. Try to read with feeling--you can even use different voices! Let your children choose the books even if they want to read their favorite book for the 100<sup>th</sup> time. And be sure to make a special place for your children to keep their books, with a comfy place to read nearby.

### 2. Talk WITH your children.

Children who know more words are more successful in school. Parents can help children learn new words by using them in conversation; for example, try saying “daisy” or “rose” instead of just “flower.” Also, talk with your children about things that are not happening right now, such as what they liked best about a recent trip to grandma’s house. And get silly—play with words! You can think up words together that begin with the letter “M”, or that rhyme with the word “kite” (even nonsense words!). Or mix things up a bit by saying: “Time to go get in the ‘flar’ (car).” Your children will love it!



### 3. Help your children learn about letters and writing.



Point out words everywhere—at the store, while driving, at home. Point at words as you read them. You can even choose a letter of the week—put it on your refrigerator and help your children look for it everywhere you go. Also, make sure that your children have easy access to writing materials, such as markers and paper, so they can practice “writing” themselves. The scribbles that they make at first are an important first step in learning to write.

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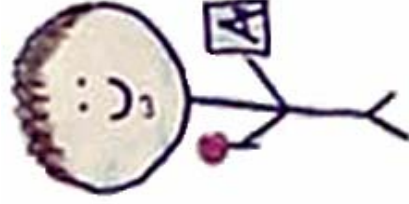
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