



# helping your child become a reader

**NoChild**  
LeftBehind  
U.S. Department of Education

*A parent is a child's first and most important teacher, which is why the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 recognizes parents' vital role in education.*

—Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings

One of the most **important** things parents can do, other than to help their children grow up healthy and **happy**, is to help them develop strong **reading** skills. It is no exaggeration to say that how well children learn to read directly affects not only how well they **perform** in school but also how **successful** they are throughout their lives. When children learn to read, they have the **key** that opens doors to all the **knowledge** in the world.

Although well-trained **teachers** and research-based reading instruction are important, the **foundation** for learning how to read must be **built** long before children begin school. There are steps that parents and families can take to **ensure** that their children are on track to becoming successful readers. This reading **adventure** is one that parents will not want to miss because the **benefits** for their children will last a **lifetime**.

All parents want their children to receive a **quality** education. The *No Child Left Behind Act*, the national effort to **improve** education, recognizes that it is **vital** for children to master the core academic subjects like reading if they are to **perform** to the highest standards of **achievement**. This brochure is based on the *Helping Your Child* series of publications for parents and families, which is **designed** to **provide** parents with the latest research and practical information to help them **support** their children and ensure their children's success in school and in life.



## activity

### A home for my books (For children ages two through six)

Starting a home library shows your child the importance of books. Having books that your child owns and keeps in a special place increases the chance that he or she will want to read and provides the opportunity to read with you every day.

#### What you need:

- ★ Books from bookstores, garage sales, flea markets, used bookstores, or sales at your local library; and
- ★ A bookcase, cardboard box, or other materials to make a place for books.

#### What to do:

- ★ Pick a special place for your child's books so that he or she knows where to look for them. A cardboard box that you decorate together could make for a good bookcase, or you might clear one of the family bookshelves.
- ★ Help your child arrange his or her books in some order—favorite books, books about animals, holiday books. Use whatever method will help you and your child most easily find reading material for different moods, times, and interests.
- ★ Borrow books from your local library. Go to the children's section and spend time with your child reading and selecting books to take home and put in his or her designated special place. You might have a separate space for library books, so that they do not get mixed up with the books your child owns.
- ★ Encourage family members and friends to give your child books for birthdays and other occasions.

*As parents, the most important thing we can do is read to our children early and often. Reading is the path to success in school and life. When children learn to love books, they learn to love learning.*

—Mrs. Laura Bush

## tips for parents

### A reading checklist

There are many ways that you can encourage your child to become a reader. Here are questions that you can ask yourself to ensure that you are on track:

#### For babies (from six weeks to one year)

- ★ Do I provide a comfortable place for our story time? Is my child happy here?
- ★ Am I showing my child the pictures in the book? Am I changing the tone of my voice as I read to show emotion and excitement?
- ★ Am I paying attention to how my child responds? What does he or she especially like? Do I recognize when my child is tired and ready to stop?

#### For toddlers (from one to three years)

All of the questions above, plus:

- ★ Does my child enjoy the book we are reading?
- ★ Do I encourage my child to “pretend to read,” joining in where he or she has memorized words or phrases?
- ★ When I ask questions, am I giving my child enough time to think and answer?
- ★ Do I tie ideas in the book to things that are familiar to my child? Does my child make connections on his or her own?
- ★ Do I let my child know how much I like his or her ideas and encourage him or her to tell me more?
- ★ Do I point out letters, such as the first letter of my child's name?

#### For preschoolers (from three to four years)

All of the questions above, plus:

- ★ Do I find ways to help my child begin to identify sounds and letters and to make letter-sound matches?



## resources

This brochure was drawn from the larger booklet in the *Helping Your Child* series, “Helping Your Child Become a Reader.” This booklet offers tips on how to build the language skills of young children (infants through age 10), a list of typical language accomplishments for different age groups, book suggestions, and resources for children with reading problems. For more information on how to help your child with reading—along with a wide range of other subjects—visit the *Helping Your Child* series Web site at [www.ed.gov/parents/academic/help/hyc.html](http://www.ed.gov/parents/academic/help/hyc.html).

**For more information on how you can help your child become a reader, take a look at the following resources from the U.S. Department of Education and other organizations:**

**U.S. Department of Education:** [www.ed.gov](http://www.ed.gov) or 1-800-USA-LEARN

**The Parents Portal:** [www.ed.gov/parents/landing.jhtml](http://www.ed.gov/parents/landing.jhtml)

**Federal Resources for Educational Excellence (FREE):**  
[www.ed.gov/free/index.html](http://www.ed.gov/free/index.html)

**Parental Information and Resource Centers:**  
[www.ed.gov/programs/pirc/index.html](http://www.ed.gov/programs/pirc/index.html)

**National Institute for Literacy:** [www.nifl.gov](http://www.nifl.gov)

**National Institute on Early Childhood Development and Education:**  
[www.ed.gov/offices/OER/ECI](http://www.ed.gov/offices/OER/ECI)

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