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**A Child Bookshelf: A Treasury Of Tales**

**By Misti Norusis**

One of the greatest gifts you can give your children is a love for reading. When a child discovers the world of books, he has the tools to learn much more than letters. He can now find, in the pages, doorways to other places and other lives. He can be a king conquering a dragon. A spy saving the world. A boy magician, a bandit, an island castaway, a sheriff. He can be anything, and all he has to do is to take a book, and let his imagination take flight.

But before he develops a love for books, he must have easy access to books. Parents can read him a bedtime story, and teachers may explain the fundamentals of reading, but what will he do if there are no parents or teachers around? Left on his own, he will reach for what is nearest and easiest, and unfortunately, that is often the television.

Building his book collection Parents must invest in children's books that are age appropriate and related to the child's interests. For example, if he likes cars, he will love reading books about them. Even if he showed no interest in the fairytales or counting books, mark our words: he will be drawn immediately to stories like Thomas the Tank Engine, and not feel that it is a "chore". Also invite him to personally choose a book at the library or bookstore. You can make it a ritual or a treat, something he can look forward to every month: "today I get to read a new book!"

Choosing a child bookshelf As he builds his book collection, let him store it in his own special child bookshelf. Why do you need a child bookshelf instead of letting him share the one you already have? First, out of practicality, he can't reach the higher shelves, and if he tries to, he could seriously hurt himself and send rows of your own books falling to the floor. You wouldn't want that to happen—especially since, long after the injury has healed, he may be too traumatized to pick up a book on his own again.

Giving your child his own child bookshelf also encourages him to take care of his books. By showing him that books are special, because the stories in them are magical and deserve some kind of care and respect, you send the message that reading (and owning a book) is a wonderful grown-up privilege. You know how children think—they want to feel important, and treated like an adult. So make reading a "serious" business: "This is a very special book, and we'll give you a very special child

bookshelf to put it in."

Storing books in a child bookshelf also make it very convenient for a child to get a book when he's bored. The desire to read may hit him at the oddest and most inconvenient times, like when you're preparing dinner, or in the middle of doing the laundry. If his books are kept in a child bookshelf, he can take them out and return them with minimum fuss. He'll also like the freedom to choose from his collection, which he can browse through freely. Children like having choices and a child bookshelf provides them with that opportunity.

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<http://www.wishrooms.com>

## **Ready Your Child For Reading**

**By Brent Sitton**

It's never too soon to start your child on the path to reading. Simply talking to your infant and toddler helps her develop the vocabulary she will need as she enters school and begins to read. As you point and name objects, she will begin to understand the meaning of words, and will eventually begin to incorporate those words into her vocabulary.

The U.S. Department of Education recommends beginning to read to your baby when she is six months old. According to their 2003 report, "Hearing words over and over helps her become familiar with them. Reading to your baby is one of the best ways to help her learn."

In that same report, the Department of Education also recommends that parents reach out to groups that can:

- \* Help you find age-appropriate books to use at home with your child;
- \* Show you creative ways to use books with your child and other tips to help her learn; and
- \* Provide year-round children's reading and educational activities.

A child's love for reading grows when the words on the page come to life through experiences shared as a family. For example, after reading Eric Carle's *Ten Little Rubber Ducks* to your toddler, you can learn all about real ducks, make ocean snacks, or go on a family outing and feed the ducks at a nearby pond.

In order to help your child get ready to read, the Department of Education also recommends:

- \* Using sounds, songs, gestures, and words that rhyme to help your baby learn about language and its many uses.

## A Child Bookshelf: A Treasury Of Tales

- \* Pointing out the printed words in your home and other places you take your child to, such as the grocery store.
- \* Spending as much time listening to your child as you do talking to her.
- \* Taking children's books and writing materials with you whenever you leave home. This gives your child fun activities to entertain and occupy herself while traveling and running errands.
- \* Creating a quiet, special place in your home for your child to read, write, and draw.
- \* Keeping books and other reading materials where your child can easily reach them. Having her own bookshelf or small bookcase will not only make her feel special, but will also communicate to her that reading is special.
- \* Reading books, newspapers and magazines yourself, so that your child can see that reading is important.
- \* Limiting the amount and type of television you and your child watch.

The best thing for you to do to ensure that your child will grow up reading well and loving to read is to read to her every day. The time you spend reading together will create a special bond between the two of you, and will open the doors for a dialogue that will continue throughout the more trying years of adolescence. The Department of Education suggests that, when you're reading, you discuss new words. As an example, they suggest that you say, "This big house is called a palace. Who do you think lives in a palace?" Likewise, they suggest taking time to ask about the pictures and what your child thinks is happening in the story.

The same report suggests additional strategies for early literacy:

- \* When reading a book with large print, point at each word as you read it. Your child will understand that the word being spoken is the word she sees.
- \* Read a favorite book over and over again.
- \* Read stories with rhyming words and lines that repeat, and have your child join in.
- \* Read from a variety of children's books, including fairy tales, poems, and non-fiction.

The more strategies you can incorporate into your child's reading experience, the more likely you are to help your child develop into a strong reader.

Brent Sitton is a founder of

<http://www.DiscoveryJourney.com>

, which features tools to promote a love

of reading. Character Trait based Children's Book Reviews include 5 related fun and educational Child Activities to inspire reading passion.

<http://www.discoveryjourney.com/bookchild.htm>

<http://www.discoveryjourney.com/charactertrait.htm>



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