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Give Your Child a Jump Start on Reading

By Barbara Snyder M.A. Ed.

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As a parent you do not have to be a reading expert to give your child a jump start in becoming a reader. However, I hope you are not waiting until the child is about to start school before making reading a key part of daily life. There is so much that a parent can do to be involved in this very important process. Research says that the support that parents give to a child is the most critical factor in a child's life.

Reading is the most important determiner in how well a child will do in school and in life. Reading can open a child up to the world of knowledge like nothing else can. It is important that the process start long before a child enters school. The only person that can establish that needed foundation is a child's parent. There are so many things that a child can learn from a parent about everyday activities and from being read to by a parent. Besides that, it can be an enjoyable experience for both the child and parent.

It all begins in infancy when a child hears voices. A parent needs to do a lot of talking to a child. The talking will lead to reading, which can be done as early as six months old. As children hear words and sounds, they begin to try and emulate what they are hearing. Their responses include cooing, giggling, and eventually actual words. Out of the many things that can be done, here are a few that a parent can do: frequent talking, frequent reading, singing, smiling, and gestures. It is very important that there is eye contact between the parent and child so that the child learns to listen and focus. Listening is one of the four components of language development which also includes speaking, reading, and writing.

As the talking leads to reading, the selections should be chosen carefully based on simplicity, size, attractiveness, and interest. Reading aloud to a child should be done several times a day for short periods of time and should become increasingly longer as the child becomes older. The real key is being consistent with the routine and praising the child throughout the entire process. Building a child's confidence and self-esteem is a by-product that will spill over into other facets of life.

It has been acknowledged that a parent does not have to be an expert in reading to read with his or her child. In fact, a parent does not even have to be a good reader to help the child. The following basic

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things should occur during a reading session: choose a book the child likes; find a comfortable, quiet place to read; explore the book by looking at the cover, title page, and pictures; read and stop to discuss the story frequently; help the child see the connection between words and pictures; and encourage questions and comments from the child. There are many materials available that can assist parents in some basic techniques.

Parents need to make books a special thing in the home, like a collection. They can be kept in a special place created to showcase the reading materials. Children will value books and respect them if a parent demonstrates that same care and value of them. Parents can also model being avid readers and life-long learners. Children need that modeling very early in life.

In choosing books, they need to be appropriate age level for the child. If a book is eye catching and is motivating, a child will read it again and again. Books that utilize repetition and rhyming are always very popular with children. Books that are filled with pictures, are ideal for reading sessions because the child will be receptive to more discussion and comment by looking at the pictures.

Where will you find the time to do the reading session with your child? Start with the television. Shave enough time from TV viewing to work on the reading activities with your child. In addition, use the television time to tie into language development. Parents need to take charge of the TV time and the selection of programs to be viewed. Choose programs that meet the following criteria: captures the child's interest; encourages listening and questioning; helps the child learn new words; helps the child's self-esteem; and can be connected to real life.

There are many stages of language development that can be addressed by parents. A parent should be involved in all components. There are many materials and handbooks available from which parents can learn the basics and can learn some specific activities to use with children. Children need a jump start in reading, and parents can make that happen.

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About the Author Barbara Snyder M.A. Ed. is a retired California Distinguished School Principal and Coordinator For Human Resources. She has a master's degree in Curriculum and Instruction. She holds elementary education, secondary, community college, and administrative credentials. She is currently a Student Teacher Supervisor at Chapman University College and the publisher of <http://EducationResourcesNetwork.com>.

How Reading Makes A Child Smart

By Jessica Davis

Reading makes you go to places. It allows you to turn back the hands of time. It will not limit you to

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write and express your thoughts. It will lead you to higher levels. And it is one of the best skills you could teach your child to develop. Reading is very important for it polishes a child's mind and makes him or her think in-depth.

As you teach a child to read now, it will be a way of preparing the child for a brighter future. It will surely enhance your child's language skills. It does not mean that if your child is not yet reading or speaking, you will not accept the idea of teaching reading. Though he or she is not reading any words, the child observes how you pronounce words and according to Bernice Cullinan, Professor of Early Childhood and Elementary Education at New York University children who learned reading have longer attention to give to listeners.

In addition, it is a way of preparing your child for some more complex words in the future. The English words that the child must learn should those be which are of his level. As they listen to you, make sure to make the words clear and point out the pictures on the book. This will allow them to recognize speech sounds and figures as well. Books about the things that are daily around them and activities they do are good examples

On the other hand, the reading of books will not just keep them educated but it is also one of the best forms of getting them entertained. Nursery rhymes and other books are very entertaining for your child. They would be realizing the fact that reading is not boring at all.

Reading will enhance your child's listening skill first. After absorbing all that you have read, the child would then develop speech skills. One of the most valuable things a child could develop from reading books is the skill of imagination.

This is also one way of showing your child that you really care. Moreover, reading time may serve as your bonding time together. A parent must always see to it that he is keeping track of his or her child's development and guide the child for the better.

Introduce reading to your child and you will introduce being smart for life...For it is in reading that he will discover a world of awe and wonder ahead.

Jessica Davis is a freelance writer for the Baby Times. She writes a regular column which is published every Thursday. Her latest 'favorite pick' is

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