Parent Guide:

Reading to Your Child

Cornell University
Cooperative Extension
Jefferson County

New York State Parental Information & Resource Center
Families and Communities Together with Schools
(315) 788-8450

www.nyspirc.org
Learning to Read

Learning how to read is a process that begins when a child is born and continues throughout the school years.

To become good readers, children need many chances to:

- Talk and listen
- Learn about print and books
- Learn about the sounds of language
- Learn about the letters of the alphabet
- Learn about new words and what they mean

Reading to your child is one of the most important things you can do to help him learn how to read on his own.
Reading Aloud

Read to your child often. Set up a reading routine by reading a story each night before bed.

Talk to your child as you read. Talk about the pictures and ask questions—even if your child can’t answer you yet.

Give your child books to explore on his own. Young children may use their hands and mouth to explore books. Give him sturdy board books that he can pull and chew on as he explores.

Read favorite books again and again. Your child may ask you to read the same stories over and over. This may seem boring to us, but it helps children learn to read by hearing familiar words and seeing what they look like in print.

Children begin to develop language, literacy, and writing skills as infants.
Good Books for Infants and Toddlers

- Board books
- Cloth books
- Touch-and-feel books
- Flap books
- Nursery rhyme books

Young children may only sit and listen to a story for a few minutes before they want to move on to the next activity, and that’s ok.

Good Books for Preschoolers

- Alphabet books
- Rhyming books
- Predictable books
Playing

Begin talking, singing, and playing simple games with your baby at birth.

- When your baby makes sounds, repeat them back to her.
- Point to familiar objects and name them as you play.
- When your child begins saying words, repeat the word he says and add more words.
- Ask your child questions and answer the questions she asks you.

- As your child gets older ask her to follow directions.
- Point out words and letters to your preschooler.

Play is how children learn. Activities you do with your child should be fun for both of you!
Activities

The following activities are things you can do with your child when you are reading and playing to help him build skills and understand books and words.

These activities can be used with children of all ages, even babies. Your baby may not answer you, but you can still read, play, and ask questions.

- CAR
- WH questions
- Open-ended questions
- Expanded book reading
- Concepts of print

This guide will explain how to use these activities with your child.
CAR

Comment
Ask
Respond

Comment and Wait

- Make a comment about what you are doing or what you are reading.
- Wait for your child to process what you said and say something back to you.

The CAR strategy can be used when you are reading or when you are playing with your child.
Ask Questions and Wait

- Ask questions about:
  - What is happening in the book or with the child?

- Ask questions to help the child:
  - Understand more about what is happening
  - Expand vocabulary
  - See how things fit together

Respond and Wait

- Add a little more to sounds the child made or what the child said
  - Keeps conversation going
  - Extends language by introducing new vocabulary
  - Develops listening skills
These are questions you can ask your child as you are playing or reading together.

- **Who**
  - Who was the character most like you?

- **What**
  - What was your favorite part of the story?

- **When**
  - When is your favorite part of the day?

- **Where**
  - Where should we put this block?

- **Why**
  - Why do you think the blocks fell down?
Open-Ended Questions

There are many types of questions parents can ask their children as they are playing and reading.

A question like "What color is that block?" has a one-word answer.

An open-ended question like, "What can you tell me about the blocks you are using?" encourages a child to describe the blocks or explain what she is doing.

*There is no right or wrong answer to an open-ended question.*

Answers to open-ended questions can show what a child is thinking and feeling. When answering an open-ended question, children use more language skills.
Expanded Book Reading

Expanded book reading is what you can do before, during, and after reading.

Before Reading

- Introduce the book by saying the title and the author.
- Take a **Picture Walk** by looking at all of the pictures and talking about what the book may be about.

During Reading

- Use props such as puppets to grab your child’s attention and talk more about the characters.
- Change your voice as you are reading to sound like different characters, use sound effects, and make expressions with your face and hands. It will make the story interesting and fun for your child. When children enjoy being read to, they will grow to love books and want to learn to read themselves.
After Reading

- Talk about the story.
- Ask your child questions about the parts of the story (characters, setting, events, problem).
- Ask your child to retell the story. Have him use puppets or props (toys, household items, or other objects that relate to the story) to retell the story.
- Ask your child to draw a picture of his favorite part of the story.
- Visit a place talked about in the story. For example, visit a zoo after reading a book about the zoo.

Use your imagination and encourage your child to use her imagination to think of activities to do before, during and after reading.
Concepts of Print

Concepts of print help your child learn how books are set up and how we read them.

Take the time to point out the following things to your child as you are reading together:

- Title
- Author
- Front and back of the book
- Letters, words, and pictures

Show your child that we read from top to bottom and left to right on a page by tracing your finger under the words as you read.
This guide was created with information from the following resources:

What is a PIRC?

**Parental Information and Resource Centers (PIRC)** are funded by the U.S. Department of Education and are located in every state.

PIRC programs help meet the academic needs of children by helping to implement parental involvement policies, programs, and activities that:

- strengthen partnerships between parents and schools.
- improve student academic achievement.
- help parents understand No Child Left Behind.

**There are two PIRC programs in New York State. For more information, contact:**

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<th>Families and Communities Together with Schools (FACTS), sponsored by Cornell Cooperative Extension of Jefferson County</th>
<th>Every Person Influences Children (EPIC)</th>
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<td><strong>315-788-8450</strong></td>
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Visit the New York State PIRC website at [www.nyspirc.org](http://www.nyspirc.org)