

8 Ways Parents Can Promote Reading at Home

By Marilyn Lopes

As a parent, you are your child's first - and most important - teacher. Here are eight ways you can help your child become a better reader.

- 1. Read yourself.** Your actions really do speak louder than your words. When your kids see you reading the newspaper or curling up with a book, they will want to follow your example.
- 2. Make sure your children read every day.** Reading - like shooting baskets and playing the piano - is a skill. Like other skills, it gets better with practice. Researchers have found that children who spend at least 30 minutes a day reading for fun - whether they read books, newspapers, or magazines - develop the skills to be better readers at school.
- 3. Get the library habit.** Make sure everyone in your family has a library card. Schedule regular trips to the library. While you are there, check out a book yourself!
- 4. Read aloud to the children.** In **The Read Aloud Handbook**, Jim Trelease reports on research showing that this is the most important thing parents can do to help their children become better readers. Here are some tips from the book: Start reading to your children when they are young. It is never too early to begin reading to your children, according to Trelease. Don't stop reading to your children as they grow older. You will both enjoy the chance to do something together. Set aside some time each day for reading aloud. Even 10 minutes a day can have a big impact. Bedtime is a natural reading aloud time. Other busy families read aloud at breakfast or just after dinner. Read books you enjoy. Your kids will know if you are faking it.
- 5. Here is a way to use your newspaper to encourage reading: a scavenger hunt.**

Give your child a list of things to find in today's newspaper. Here are some ideas:
A map of the United States.
A picture of your child's favorite athlete.
The temperature in the city where a family member lives.
Three words that begin with "w".
A movie that is playing at a nearby theater.
- 6. Give books as gifts.** Then find a special place for your children to keep their own library.
- 7. Make reading a privilege.** Say, "You can stay up 15 minutes later tonight if you read in bed." Or you might say, "Because you helped with the dishes, I have time to read you an extra story."
- 8. If you are not a good reader, you can still encourage your children.** As your children learn to read, ask them to read to you. Talk about the books your children have read. Ask a friend or relative to read aloud to your children.

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