



READING WITH YOUR CHILD

Children begin literacy learning long before their first day of formal schooling. Children's earliest literacy encounters begin in infancy with their family. Therefore, it is important that parents and carers are aware of the ways in which they can support and encourage literacy learning. Research shows that children who are in a home environment rich with literacy experiences achieve greater success when it comes to reading ability and engagement throughout their lives.

The emphasis for parents when helping children establish strong foundations in literacy is fun. Reading associated with relaxed and enjoyable experiences fosters a love of literature and curiosity about the world.

Getting your child off to a good start in reading

Engage your child in an environment rich in literacy experiences. Show them that you value reading by:

- Reading with your child daily. Make it part of your routine. Reading picture books with your child helps develop the context of written words and a love of reading, models reading behaviours and introduces children to story language
- Surrounding your child with high quality books
- Visiting the library
- Buying books as presents
- Browsing in a bookstore rather than a toy store
- Providing your child with a special area or shelving at home to keep books
- Reading aloud with enthusiasm and animation to your child every chance you get e.g. at bedtime, in waiting rooms and playing audio books in the car
- Singing songs and nursery rhymes together, playing funny word games, making up silly rhymes
- Telling jokes
- Going for a walk and reading the signs in the neighbourhood, reading the signs in the supermarket.

Be a role model

Show your child that all members of the family read, for pleasure and as a function of everyday life.

Show them you are a reader by:

- Getting excited about reading and writing
- Reading silently in front of them
- Reading aloud from recipes
- Writing lists together
- Composing a letter to relatives together
- Flipping through magazines, sharing anything funny or interesting
- Looking up information to a question they may have
- Sharing favourite books from your childhood
- Reading and sharing brochures in waiting rooms.

Reading with your child should never be a test

It is important that children have opportunities to succeed in literacy and view themselves as successful readers and writers.

Set your child up for success by:

- Letting them read the same book over and over again; allowing them to 'pretend' to read a book and make up the story
- Encouraging them to look at the pictures for enjoyment and as insight into the story
- Praising any attempts they make as they learn to read, in the same way that you praised their attempts when learning to speak
- Emphasising reading for meaning and understanding by not correcting them every time they make meaningful substitutions such as bunny for rabbit
- Facilitating play with language through books and writing with crayons and pencils in a way that is risk and judgement free
- Talking about links between the story and their own experiences.

Finally, expect that your child *will* be a reader and a writer just as you did when they learned to talk and walk. Remember that every child learns at a different pace and while there are average timeframes for developmental achievements it is important to praise all attempts and celebrate every success whether it be memorising a book, holding a book the right way, or understanding that the print on the page conveys meaning. These are all important pre-reading milestones and the beginning of functional reading. Build a positive and loving relationship around literacy.

Connecting home and preschool

Developing and maintaining strong connections between home and preschool is recognised as an important element of children's literacy development. Experiences in early childhood settings build on children's prior knowledge and the range of experiences with language and literacy that children have within their families and communities (EYLF, p. 38).

Ways to connect may include:

- Taking opportunities to be involved in the preschool program and engaged in children's learning
- Borrowing books from the preschool library
- Sharing stories from home
- Reading to children in home languages
- Accompanying your child on visits and excursions
- Reading notices, emails and newsletters together.