



Reading and Talking With Your Preschooler



Children's book author Mem Fox says there are three "secrets" that help us learn to read:

The ability to make sense of the marks and squiggles on a page (the print)

Knowing as much language as possible (understanding language)

Having information and knowledge (understanding how the world works)

How can you help your child know these secrets? By reading as many books as possible and talking together about those reading experiences.

Preschoolers are beginning to figure out the difference between real and make-believe, name shapes, colors and letters. They listen for rhymes and like to play with sound.

They love to make up their own stories, tell jokes, and sing songs. Some four- and five-year-olds spend a lot of time "reading" on their own. They like to learn about new subjects

You may begin to see your child hold a pencil and "write" notes by scribbling. He probably likes drawing pictures and trying to use letters and sounds to write his name, lists or labels. He may be starting to know some of the letters of the alphabet and matching sounds.

Four- and five-year-olds like books with:

adventures

characters with humorous, exaggerated problems, as well as real-life problems

stories that take place in faraway lands

facts about nature, sports, how things work, other cultures

bright, humorous illustrations

Four-year-olds:

Show your child all kinds of print: read signs, memos, menus, letters, catalogs.

Point out individual letters and say the sound they make.

Give your child lots of experiences to draw, color, paint, and write.

Ask questions about your child's work and label it. Remember that scribbling is an important step on the way to learning to write.

Occasionally point out key features of print (such as reading books from left to right and from top to bottom) as you read to your child.

Children want to expand their worlds beyond family, but they want to feel safe at the same time. Familiar books and comforting stories can calm a child's fear.

There are lots of shapes, sizes and colors in books. Talk about these, count them and look at the sameness and differences.

Repetition is important in all our learning. Don't get frustrated when you get a 10th request for the same book.

Five-year-olds:

Help your child learn to write her name—but be patient. Many children don't learn to write their names until kindergarten.

You will begin to see more detail in your child's drawings. He may want to tell a story with his artwork.

Ask your child to retell a story for you. What happened *first*, what happened *second*, what happened *third*...?

Share books with your child that are full of real life: science, nature, how things work.

Have books, paper, pens and crayons where your child can reach.

Play word and rhyming games together. Play and be silly with words: words that rhyme, words that start with the same sound, words that are made up.

Your child will want to tell you stories and talk about the stories you read together.