

Tips for Reading to Preschoolers

(National Education Association, 2006)

- Snuggle with your child with her favorite blanket or toys as you read.
- Read with expression using different voices for different characters.
- Emphasize rhythms and rhymes in stories. Give your toddler opportunities to repeat rhyming phrases.
- Encourage your child to repeat what you say or comment on it. Encourage your child to ask questions. Provide models of interesting questions and examples of possible answers: "I wonder what is going to happen next? I think the rabbit will get lost because he is not paying attention to where he is going. What do you think?"
- Look for books that are about things that interest your toddler. For example, does your child like cars, insects or animals?
- Give your child a chance to choose his own books for reading. If your toddler chooses a book that is too long to hold his attention, read some and skip some, discussing the pictures and how they relate to the story.
- Read stories again and again. Your toddler enjoys repetition, and it helps her become familiar with the way stories are organized.
- If your child is curious and is making comments about letters, there is no reason why she should not become familiar with the alphabet before she starts school. Playing with alphabet blocks and singing "The Alphabet Song" are happy ways for your child to become acquainted with letters.
- Make books a joyous and important part of your child's life. Read to him every day. Let him talk about the stories. Ask questions about the pictures. Ask him to point out pictured objects that are alike and different in shape and in color. This activity helps children to observe small differences in the shapes of letters and words when learning to read.
- Avoid baby talk. Speak to your child in grownup language now, so she will recognize words she sees and hears in the classroom. Also, baby words for objects may be laughed at by the other youngsters.
- Provide a variety of experiences. Take your child to the zoo, the park, the airport. Teach your child the names of animals, flowers, etc. In order to understand the words encountered in reading, your child should have first-hand experience with the objects they stand for.
- From time to time, give your child simple, consecutive instructions. For example: "Pick up the ball, then bounce it, then put it on the table." Make a game out of it, if you like. Such activities will help your child develop memory skills and follow directions accurately, both of which are essential in school.
- Set a good example as a reader — read every day at home even if it is a magazine or newspaper.
- Make reading fun — a time that you both look forward to spending together.