



TIPS | for parents of Babies

It's never too early to read to your baby. As soon as your baby is born, he or she starts learning. Just by talking to, playing with, and caring for your baby every day, you help your baby develop language skills necessary to become a reader. By reading with your baby, you foster a love of books and reading right from the start. The tips below offer some fun ways you can help your child become a happy and confident reader. Try a new tip each week. See what works best for your child.

■ Snuggle up with a book

When you hold your baby close and look at a book together, your baby will enjoy the snuggling and hearing your voice as well as the story. Feeling safe and secure with you while looking at a book builds your baby's confidence and love of reading.

■ Choose baby-friendly books

Books with bright and bold or high-contrast illustrations are easier for young babies to see, and will grab their attention. Books made of cloth or soft plastic (for the bathtub) or "board books" with sturdy cardboard pages are easier for a baby to handle.

■ Keep books where your baby can reach them

Make sure books are as easy to reach, hold, and look at as toys. Remember, a baby will do with a book what he does with everything else—put it in his mouth. And that's exactly what he's supposed to do, so you may only want to put chewable books within reach.

■ Talk with your baby—all day long

Describe the weather or which apples you are choosing at the grocery. Talk about the pictures in a book or things you see on a walk. Ask questions. By listening, your child learns words, ideas, and how language works.

■ Encourage your baby's coos, growls, and gurgles

They are your baby's way of communicating with you, and are important first steps toward speech. Encourage attempts to mimic you. The more your baby practices making sounds, the clearer they will become. Go ahead and moo, woof and honk!

■ Give baby a hand!

Encourage your baby to pick up crackers or peas, touch noses and toes, point to pictures and grab toys. The muscles in those little hands will grow strong, agile, and ready to turn pages.

■ Develop a daily routine (and make reading a part of it)

Routines can soothe a baby, and let a baby learn to predict what will happen next. The ability to predict is important when your child is older and is reading independently.

■ Sing, Read, Repeat

Read favorite stories and sing favorite songs over and over again. Repeated fun with books will strengthen language development and positive feelings about reading.

■ "Read" your baby

Pay attention to how your baby reacts to the book you are reading. Stop if your baby isn't enjoying the story and try another book or another time.

Visit www.ReadingRockets.org for more information on how you can launch a child into a bright future through reading.



TIPS | for parents of Toddlers

Being a toddler is all about ACTION. Encourage continued language development and interest in books and reading by keeping things lively and engaging. Everyday experiences are full of opportunities to engage in conversation and develop language skills. The tips below offer some fun ways you can help your child become a happy and confident reader. Try a new tip each week. See what works best for your child.

■ **Don't expect your toddler to sit still for a book**

Toddlers need to MOVE, so don't worry if they act out stories or just skip, romp, or tumble as you read to them. They may be moving, but they are listening.

■ **Recite rhymes, sing songs, and make mistakes!**

Pause to let your toddler finish a phrase or chant a refrain. Once your toddler is familiar with the rhyme or pattern, make mistakes on purpose and get caught.

■ **Choose engaging books**

Books featuring animals or machines invite movement and making sounds. Books with flaps or different textures to touch keep hands busy. Books with detailed illustrations or recurring items hidden in the pictures are great for exploring and discussing.

■ **Keep reading short, simple, and often**

Toddlers frequently have shorter attention spans than babies. Look for text that is short and simple. Read a little bit, several times a day.

■ **Encourage play that involves naming, describing, and communicating**

Set up a zoo with all the stuffed animals. Stage a race with the toy cars. Put your toddler in charge and ask lots of questions.

■ **Every day is an adventure when you're a toddler**

Choose books about everyday experiences and feelings. Your child will identify with the characters as they dress, eat, visit, nap, and play.

■ **Ask questions**

Take time to listen to your toddler's answers. Toddlers have strong opinions and interesting ideas about the world. Encourage your toddler to tell you what he or she thinks. You'll build language skills and learn what makes your toddler tick at the same time.

■ **Play to their favorites**

Read favorite stories again and again. Seek out books about things your toddler especially likes—trains, animals, the moon. These books may extend a toddler's attention span and build enthusiasm for reading.

■ **Not having fun?**

Try a different story or a different time during the day. Reading with a very young child is primarily about building positive experiences with books, not finishing every book you start.

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TIPS | for parents of Preschoolers

Read early and read often. The early years are critical to developing a lifelong love of reading. It's never too early to begin reading to your child! The tips below offer some fun ways you can help your child become a happy and confident reader. Try a new tip each week. See what works best for your child.

■ **Read together every day.**

Read to your child every day. Make this a warm and loving time when the two of you can cuddle close.

■ **Give everything a name.**

Build your child's vocabulary by talking about interesting words and objects. For example, "Look at that airplane! Those are the wings of the plane. Why do you think they are called wings?"

■ **Say how much you enjoy reading.**

Tell your child how much you enjoy reading with him or her. Talk about "story time" as the favorite part of your day.

■ **Read with fun in your voice.**

Read to your child with humor and expression. Use different voices. Ham it up!

■ **Know when to stop.**

Put the book away for awhile if your child loses interest or is having trouble paying attention.

■ **Be interactive.**

Discuss what's happening in the book, point out things on the page, and ask questions.

■ **Read it again and again.**

Go ahead and read your child's favorite book for the 100th time!

■ **Talk about writing, too.**

Mention to your child how we read from left to right and how words are separated by spaces.

■ **Point out print everywhere.**

Talk about the written words you see in the world around you. Ask your child to find a new word on each outing.

■ **Get your child evaluated.**

Please be sure to see your child's pediatrician or teacher as soon as possible if you have concerns about your child's language development, hearing, or sight.

Visit www.ReadingRockets.org for more information on how you can launch a child into a bright future through reading.

TIPS | for parents of Kindergartners

Play with letters, words, and sounds! Having fun with language helps your child learn to crack the code of reading. The tips below offer some fun ways you can help your child become a happy and confident reader. Try a new tip each week. See what works best for your child.

■ **Talk to your child.**

Ask your child to talk about his day at school. Encourage him to explain something they did, or a game he played during recess.

■ **Say silly tongue twisters.**

Sing songs, read rhyming books, and say silly tongue twisters. These help kids become sensitive to the sounds in words.

■ **Read it and experience it.**

Connect what your child reads with what happens in life. If reading a book about animals, relate it to your last trip to the zoo.

■ **Use your child's name.**

Point out the link between letters and sounds. Say, "John, the word *jump* begins with the same sound as your name. *John, jump*. And they both begin with the same letter, J."

■ **Play with puppets.**

Play language games with puppets. Have the puppet say, "My name is *Mark*. I like words that rhyme with my name. Does *park* rhyme with *Mark*? Does *ball* rhyme with *Mark*?"

■ **Trace and say letters.**

Have your child use a finger to trace a letter while saying the letter's sound. Do this on paper, in sand, or on a plate of sugar.

■ **Write it down.**

Have paper and pencils available for your child to use for writing. Working together, write a sentence or two about something special. Encourage your child to use the letters and sounds he or she is learning about in school.

■ **Play sound games.**

Practice blending sounds into words. Ask "Can you guess what this word is? *m - o - p*." Hold each sound longer than normal.

■ **Read it again and again.**

Go ahead and read your child's favorite book for the 100th time! As you read, pause and ask your child about what is going on in the book.

■ **Talk about letters and sounds.**

Help your child learn the names of the letters and the sounds the letters make. Turn it into a game! "I'm thinking of a letter and it makes the sound mmmmmm."

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TIPS | for parents of First Graders

Give your child lots of opportunities to read aloud. Inspire your young reader to practice every day! The tips below offer some fun ways you can help your child become a happy and confident reader. Try a new tip each week. See what works best for your child.

■ **Don't leave home without it.**

Bring along a book or magazine any time your child has to wait, such as at a doctor's office. Always try to fit in reading!

■ **Once is not enough.**

Encourage your child to re-read favorite books and poems. Re-reading helps kids read more quickly and accurately.

■ **Dig deeper into the story.**

Ask your child questions about the story you've just read. Say something like, "Why do you think Clifford did that?"

■ **Take control of the television.**

It's difficult for reading to compete with TV and video games. Encourage reading as a free-time activity.

■ **Be patient.**

When your child is trying to sound out an unfamiliar word, give him or her time to do so. Remind your child to look closely at the first letter or letters of the word.

■ **Pick books that are at the right level.**

Help your child pick books that are not too difficult. The aim is to give your child lots of successful reading experiences.

■ **Play word games.**

Have your child sound out the word as you change it from *mat* to *fat* to *sat*; from *sat* to *sag* to *sap*; and from *sap* to *sip*.

■ **I read to you, you read to me.**

Take turns reading aloud at bedtime. Kids enjoy this special time with their parents.

■ **Gently correct your young reader.**

When your child makes a mistake, gently point out the letters he or she overlooked or read incorrectly. Many beginning readers will guess wildly at a word based on its first letter.

■ **Talk, talk, talk!**

Talk with your child every day about school and things going on around the house. Sprinkle some interesting words into the conversation, and build on words you've talked about in the past.

■ **Write, write, write!**

Ask your child to help you write out the grocery list, a thank you note to Grandma, or to keep a journal of special things that happen at home. When writing, encourage your child to use the letter and sound patterns he or she is learning at school.

Visit www.ReadingRockets.org for more information on how you can launch a child into a bright future through reading.



TIPS | for parents of Second Graders

Find ways to read, write, and tell stories together with your child. Always applaud your young reader and beginning story writer! The tips below offer some fun ways you can help your child become a happy and confident reader. Try a new tip each week. See what works best for your child.

■ Tell family tales.

Children love to hear stories about their family. Talk about a funny thing that happened when you were young.

■ Create a writing toolbox.

Fill a box with drawing and writing materials. Find opportunities for your child to write, such as the shopping list, thank you notes, or birthday cards.

■ Be your child's #1 fan.

Ask your child to read aloud what he or she has written for school. Be an enthusiastic listener.

■ One more time with feeling.

When your child has sounded out an unfamiliar word, have him or her re-read that sentence. Often kids are so busy figuring out a word they lose the meaning of what they've just read.

■ Invite an author to class.

Ask an author to talk to your child's class about the writing process. Young children often think they aren't smart enough if they can't sit down and write a perfect story on the first try.

■ Create a book together.

Fold pieces of paper in half and staple them to make a book. Ask your child to write sentences on each page and add his or her own illustrations.

■ Do storytelling on the go.

Take turns adding to a story the two of you make up while riding in a car or bus. Try making the story funny or spooky.

■ Point out the relationship between words.

Explain how related words have similar spellings and meanings. Show how a word like *knowledge*, for example, relates to a word like *know*.

■ Use a writing checklist.

Have your child create a writing checklist with reminders such as, "Do all of my sentences start with a capital? Yes/No."

■ Quick, quick.

Use new words your child has learned in lively flash card or computer drills. Sometimes these help kids automatically recognize and read words, especially those that are used frequently.

Visit www.ReadingRockets.org for more information on how you can launch a child into a bright future through reading.



TIPS | for parents of Third Graders

Read about it, talk about it, and think about it! Find ways for your child to build understanding, the ultimate goal of learning how to read. The tips below offer some fun ways you can help your child become a happy and confident reader. Try a new tip each week. See what works best for your child.

■ Make books special.

Turn reading into something special. Take your kids to the library, help them get their own library card, read with them, and buy them books as gifts. Have a favorite place for books in your home or, even better, put books everywhere.

■ Get them to read another one.

Find ways to encourage your child to pick up another book. Introduce him or her to a series like *The Boxcar Children* or *The Magic Tree House* or to a second book by a favorite author, or ask the librarian for additional suggestions.

■ Crack open the dictionary.

Let your child see you use a dictionary. Say, "Hmm, I'm not sure what that word means... I think I'll look it up."

■ Talk about what you see and do.

Talk about everyday activities to build your child's background knowledge, which is crucial to listening and reading comprehension. Keep up a running patter, for example, while cooking together, visiting somewhere new, or after watching a TV show.

■ First drafts are rough.

Encourage your child when writing. Remind him or her that writing involves several steps. No one does it perfectly the first time.

■ Different strokes for different folks.

Read different types of books to expose your child to different types of writing. Some kids, especially boys, prefer nonfiction books.

■ Teach your child some "mind tricks".

Show your child how to summarize a story in a few sentences or how to make predictions about what might happen next. Both strategies help a child comprehend and remember.

■ "Are we there yet?"

Use the time spent in the car or bus for wordplay. Talk about how jam means something you put on toast as well as cars stuck in traffic. How many other homonyms can your child think of? When kids are highly familiar with the meaning of a word, they have less difficulty reading it.

Visit www.ReadingRockets.org for more information on how you can launch a child into a bright future through reading.

1 Have conversations before, during, and after reading together

These activities are typically appropriate for children in kindergarten through third grade.

Having conversations when reading with children helps them develop higher-level thinking and language skills, such as predicting, problem solving, or contrasting. While reading books aloud, ask the child questions and talk about the content of the story together before, during, and after reading.

- Use open-ended questions to ask the child to think about the book's messages and what is happening. See the box below for examples of questions to ask children when reading different types of books.
- Ask the child to apply the book's messages to the world around him by connecting events to his own life.
- Ask more and more complex questions, so the child continues to build her vocabulary and language skills.

Example questions for

informational books

that explain facts about the world, such as books about animals

- Why do birds fly south for winter?



- What would happen if you planted a tree in the desert?

- Why is it important to recycle?



Example questions for

narrative books

that are about a series of events, whether fictional or nonfictional, such as stories



- Why did the character do what he did?
- What else could she have done?
- If you were in that story, what would you have done?

What skills will this practice help build?

Having conversations about what they are reading helps children build vocabulary and develop skills using language typically found in school settings. Building their skills to think and connect ideas from many contexts allows children to follow more complex language, which they might find in stories, instructions, and descriptions of historical events or nature.

2 Help children learn how to break sentences into words and words into syllables

These activities are typically appropriate for children in kindergarten and first grade.

Before children can identify letter sounds in words or reading, they can learn how spoken language can be broken down into smaller pieces.

- Show children that they can break down sentences into words.
 - Practice identifying the words in a sentence by saying a sentence aloud and asking the child to count the number of words in that sentence.
 - For instance, have the child count the number of words in the sentence “The boy ate two pieces of pizza” and correct any mistakes.
- Talk about how to combine two words to form another word and about how some words can be broken into smaller words. The box below shows a conversation about this.



Adult: Sometimes you can put two words together to form another word. For example, if I put *straw* and *berry* together, I get *strawberry*. What do you get if you put *book* and *shelf* together?

Child: *Bookshelf.*

Adult: That's right! You can also break some words into smaller words. What do you get if you take the *cow* out of *cowboy*?

Child: *Boy?*

Adult: That's right!



After children can identify words in sentences, they can begin to break words into **syllables**. Here are two examples of how to show breaking words into syllables:



1. Place your hand under your chin and notice the number of times your chin moves down as you say a word slowly.
2. Hold up a finger for each syllable as you say a word.

A **syllable** is a part of a word that has one vowel sound. One or more letters can be the vowel sound, and a consonant may or may not come before and/or follow it. For example, the word “banana” has three syllables: ba-nan-a.

After showing these strategies, have the child practice finding syllables in familiar words.

What skills will this practice help build?

Learning how to identify words in sentences and syllables within words helps children understand how to break down the sounds within spoken language. Identifying parts of speech—such as words and syllables—will prepare children to learn about smaller sounds tied to specific letters. These are skills that a child can practice even before he or she has started reading or identifying letter sounds in words.

3 Help children sound out words smoothly

These activities are typically appropriate for children in kindergarten through third grade.

Sounding out a word involves saying the sound of each letter or letter combination one by one until the end of the word, and then saying them all together again quickly. Help children sound out words by:

- Showing how to say each letter sound in a word, starting at the left-hand letter and moving right, and then joining all the sounds together to form the word.
- Stretching and connecting sounds together as much as possible. The box below shows an example of how this might sound.
- Reminding children to check their pronunciation after they connect the sounds together. For example:
 - Ask if the word makes sense or if it is a real word.
 - Ask if they know the word that they said after saying the letters all together quickly.
 - If the word is not familiar, ask them to read the word again to make sure they joined all the sounds together correctly.

Sounding out words smoothly helps children remember and combine sounds to arrive at the correct word. Here is an example with the word *man*:



Adult: How does this word start?

Child: /mmmm/

Adult: Then what's the next sound?

Child: /aaaaa/

Adult: And then what sound comes next?

Child: /nnnnn/

Adult: What happens when you put them together?

Child: /mmmmaaaannnn/

Adult: What is the word?

Child: Man!

What skills will this practice help build?

Recognizing and manipulating sounds that are part of words and linking those sounds to letters is necessary to prepare children to read words and understand what they are reading. Children must be able to identify the individual sounds that make up the words they hear in speech, name the letters of the alphabet as they appear in print, and identify each letter's corresponding sound(s). When children know a few consonant and vowel sounds and their corresponding letters, they can start to sound out and blend those letters into simple words.

4 Model reading fluently by practicing reading aloud with your child

These activities are typically appropriate for children in kindergarten and first grade.

*Having children read aloud daily, both with and without feedback, helps them develop the skills of reading **accuracy**, **fluency**, and **comprehension**. The boxes below show several approaches to use when reading aloud together.*

When reading aloud with children:

- Model and provide feedback on proper tone, pausing, and which words to emphasize.
- Set a slow, steady pace, slowing down for words that are challenging. Gradually increase the pace, moving on to more difficult books. Remind the child that reading fluently does not necessarily mean reading quickly.
- Use familiar books. Make sure that the book is appropriate to the child's reading ability. If the book is too difficult, children can develop poor reading habits.

Accuracy is the ability to read text aloud accurately, but without regard to rate.

Fluency is the ability to read a passage of text aloud accurately, at an appropriate rate, and with expression.

Take turns reading continuous passages of a book.



Passage A
Adult



Passage B
Child



Passage C
Adult

Read the same passage of a book aloud at the same time.

Passage A

Adult



Child



Read a passage of a book aloud and then have the child read the same passage aloud.

Passage A



Adult



Child

What skills will this practice help build?

Reading books daily, both with and without feedback, can begin as soon as children can identify a few words. It requires children to identify words quickly, combine ideas in the book with their background knowledge, ask themselves questions about their understanding, and apply strategies to help comprehension and fix misunderstandings. Then, children can connect with a variety of books of different levels and wide-ranging content.

BRIDGEWATER ACADEMY PARENT EVENT

BINGO FOR BOOKS -FEBRUARY 10, 2026

Parent Event Evaluation Form

1. Overall Satisfaction

- Very satisfied
- Satisfied
- Neutral
- Unsatisfied
- Very unsatisfied

2. Handout: Do you have more ideas about how to help your child read at home?

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Other: _____

3. How would you rate the following aspects of the event?

Aspect	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
Organization	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Venue	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Information provided	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Activities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Time of event	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

OTHER COMMENTS
