The First Five Years: Wow!

From birth to age 5, your child's brain is developing at a speed unmatched the rest of his or her life.

You are your child's first and most influential teacher. When you read, talk, sing, and cuddle with your child each day, you help develop strong brain connections that will determine how your child thinks, learns, and grows.

Read together 20 minutes every day and Play With a Purpose for another 10 minutes. Engaging in these activities is essential for nurturing a child's literacy and math skills and for building strong relationships.

Reading Tips Based On Your Child's Age

Read With Your Baby

- Snuggle with your baby so he can feel and hear your voice.
- Hold your baby so she can see the pictures and pat the pages. Linger on pages that interest your baby.
- Read in a soothing tone that expresses love and security. Slow down and speak clearly.
- Always try to give your baby your full attention. Make eye contact and smile.

Read With Your Toddler

- Talk about the simple, colorful pictures in the book. Name and point to objects and colors.
- Let your child help choose books, turn the pages, and "read" words.
- Change your voice for different characters and emotions. Help your child make the sounds of animals.
- Ask "Where is..." questions. Together point to answers in the pictures.
- Read favorite books again and again.
- Relax and enjoy reading together. Be enthusiastic!

Read With Your Preschooler

- An easy habit is to read three books a day - two familiar stories and perhaps one that is new.
- Be enthusiastic and smile! Read with a lot of expression. Change your voice and volume.
- Allow plenty of time to look at and talk about the pictures. Let your child turn the pages.
- Pause to ask questions about the characters and events. Encourage conversation. Make up a new character or ending.
- Point out letters and sounds, such as letters in your child's name. Clap or jump the syllables in the characters' names.
- Sometimes move your finger under the words as you read. Your child can say "stop" when you come to a dot (period).
- Use book terms, such as cover, page, word, and sentence. Prompt your child to retell the story. What happened in the beginning, middle, and the end?

Read With Your School-Age Child

- Relax and enjoy 20 happy minutes with your child. Share insights and ideas with each other while you read.
- Take turns reading; you read one paragraph or page and your child reads the next.
- Be enthusiastic and encouraging. Talk about the book and appreciate your child's effort.
- Go to the library often. Find topics that interest your child, such as animals, jokes, or heroes. Reread favorites.
- Ask your child's teacher or your librarian for a list of books that are good for your child's age and reading level.
- Chapter and series books provide lots of practice and entertainment.

The Children's Reading Foundation®

Kentucky Department of Education — Our Children, Our Commonwealth

Read Together 20 Minutes Every Day™

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