

Helping Your Child Be Ready to Learn to Read

Most children learn to read unfamiliar words when they are in kindergarten, first, and second grade. For younger children, there are many things that parents and adults can do to help them develop the foundational skills that will build their success for the elementary school reading program.

The New Mexico Early Learning Outcomes include several school-success building skills related to reading and writing. Our goal for each child is that he or she

- learn to listen to directions and conversations;
- begin to hear the sounds in words and the sounds that letters make;
- speak in his or her home language to communicate with others;
- enjoy looking at and listening to books;
- show an understanding of a story read aloud by asking questions and making comments;
- start to recognize letters; and
- attempt to scribble or write letters and words



The following activities can help support your child's skill development and support learning to read in kindergarten, first, or second grade:

With your Child, Play with the Alphabet and Letter Sounds

- Sing the ABC's song
- Play with alphabet puzzles and read alphabet books
- Have your child learn the letters and the right sequence of those letters in their name
- Point out letters as you read and write, on cereal boxes as you eat breakfast, and find them in other places in your daily lives
- Respond to your child's interest and questions about letters
- DO NOT do worksheets or drill activities, unless your child initiates them and enjoys them
- DO NOT drill your child on tracing shapes or letters or writing on lined paper, unless your child initiates it and enjoys it
- Play with the sounds of language
- Make up rhymes and sing silly songs
- Talk about the sounds that letters make as you read and converse



Share Reading with Your Child

Read books, magazines, and newspapers with your child. You can look at the pictures, talk about what you see, point to and label objects, read the print, or read the full story. All of these experiences will help your child develop an interest in reading and an understanding of some fundamentals, such as directionality (left to right and top to bottom).

You can also read words and phrases together on the television, on signs out in the community, on letters you write or receive, on grocery coupons, and labels on food products. This helps your child see how reading is an important part of our lives.

As you share your reading, play games with your child. When driving down the road in the family car, look for the letter "A" on a sign. Or see if your child can identify signs in the environment. When grocery shopping, play "I'm trying to find the cereal that has a big K on it." You can make your errands and family trips wonderful learning experiences and more interesting and engaging for everyone.

Talk and Listen

Have lots of conversations with your child.

- Describe what you are doing
- Use new words
- Ask questions
- Ask him his ideas on topics
- Ask her to share her thinking with you
- DO NOT correct your child's speech—rather model back the conventional way it is said
- Sing together
- Use silly words
- Make up funny rhymes.
- Find time to read to your child daily (at any time during the day and at bedtime)
- Laugh and giggle together!



Share Writing with Your Child

Share the ways you use writing in your everyday life (e.g., grocery lists, letters and cards, bills)

Provide writing materials to your child (have a special drawer or box)

Encourage your child to write along with you, making her own grocery list or writing his own letter to grandma.

Accept his attempts at writing as being just right for his age and assure him that he will learn to write "the grown-up way" as he goes on in school.

Help your child learn to write his or her name on unlined paper, using a capital first letter and lower case letters after. This is an appropriate expectation for most four-year-olds.

References:

PED. (2019). New Mexico Early Learning Guidelines.