



Raising Lifelong Readers From the Start

by MADELINE L. BOSKEY

As a parent, it is your privilege to teach your young child to enjoy reading and to value it as a way to learn and to connect to other people, places, and ideas. Making the time to enjoy reading with your child is truly the gift of a lifetime.



LITERACY CHAMPION: MADELINE BOSKEY, Ph.D.

Madeline is a developmental psychologist committed to the joy of reading and learning. During her graduate school years, Madeline studied language acquisition and cognitive development. Always interested in young children's urge to be connected, her dissertation explored how toddlers maintain their part in conversations and play by making meaning from the context of their interactions.

Madeline's career began at Children's Television Workshop (now Sesame Workshop)—the home of one of the best exemplars of joyful learning. There she directed the editorial research for the content of several magazines in the publishing group. After working in research for many years, including for *Sports Illustrated KIDS* (then at Time Inc.), Madeline's work segued into trade and educational publishing and creating literacy programs for children pre-K to high school. She worked for Scholastic and Pearson, developing and editing key literacy programs for students from Pre-K to high school. As a literacy editor, she gained an understanding of the pedagogy of reading and writing.

Madeline has written parenting columns in for a range of clients, including Scholastic Inc., *New Jersey Family Magazine*, and Grolier. Her blog, madforreading.com, is loaded with simple tips for parents and caregivers to help cultivate a love for reading in very young children.

By building on her academic background in child development, and pairing it with her professional knowledge about how children learn to read, Madeline offers a unique perspective on promoting early literacy.



One to Know: How to Raise Lifelong Readers

Once they reach elementary school children will learn to read—some before others. Some children “get it” right away. Others take a little longer. Along the way you may wonder if it will ever happen. Trust me, your child will learn to read. As you have already learned in the first few years of your child’s life, each child develops on his or her own path. Some take a few extra months to roll over or to take those first steps. The same way, your child will learn to read at his or her own pace.

As a parent, your priority is to lead your child to enjoy reading and to value it as a way to learn and to connect to other people, places, and ideas. The prospect may be a little bit scary. You may be asking yourself, “Me? I’m not a reading expert.”

The thing is ... you don’t have to be a reading teacher to teach your child to love to read. What you do need to do is make the time to enjoy reading with your child. That’s it!

What to Do

Parents and caregivers can encourage their very young children to enjoy reading in simple ways. Here are some ideas.

- Find ways to help young children build their understanding of stories by asking questions, encouraging children to talk about their ideas.
- Expand on topics that your child enjoys reading about, by stepping out in the world to learn even more.
- Seek out recommended books, curated for quality, which include, but are not limited to exploring feelings, seeking out diverse characters and authors, and overcoming challenges.
- Act out a favorite storybook with your child, even adding props.
- Model your own reading habits and activities, pointing out how reading and writing are a part of your life.
- Add excitement to your read alouds, trying out varied intonations and volumes, adding expression, acting silly.
- Allow your young child to choose the books for read alouds, being patient even if you have read the book 100 (or 1,000) times.
- Point out print to your child wherever you see it—“stop” signs, “exit” signs, public buildings (“school,” “library”) and house numbers, for example.

All of these ideas and many more are included in a book that Madeline is writing for parents and caregivers about ways to cultivate a love of reading in young children. In addition, she has authored a number of books for children from babies to middle school. These include the following, among others:

More to Know and Do

Reading with young children is a perfect opportunity for connecting in important ways. The intimacy for a cozy read-aloud fosters the connections among love, comfort, and reading—a powerful combination. Whether is a nightly routine built early in a baby’s life, or an impromptu “let’s find out” moment, the precious time spent with a young child offers more than the text on the page. Fostering a positive and loving experience around reading is the key to raising children who become lifelong readers.

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