



UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS EXTENSION

Nibbles... Ideas for Families

Kids & Food

Help Your
Child Succeed

Your Child's Health

Challenges of
Parenting

Learning to Get Along

Playtime Is Fun Time

The Day Care Routine

Learning About Letters and Words

When you read to children they learn about letters and words. They learn that words in a story are always the same. They may also learn that words go across the page from left to right and that there are spaces between words.

There are many fun ways to learn with your child. Here are some ideas to try:

- Write down a story your child tells you. The story can be about a special event or one you make up together. Let your child add drawings or glue on items like pictures, cards or dried leaves they have collected. Keep the new "book" and read it often.
- Make shopping lists together. Your child can draw pictures of the items and you can add the words. You can also help your child form the letters for simple words. Because this may take forever, it's not a good idea if you're in a hurry.
- Use magnetic letters to learn about letters and spell words. While you work in the kitchen, your child can pick out letters and try to spell words on the refrigerator.

Encourage your child to use what he knows about letters and the sounds they stand for to spell as best he can.

- Make letters together from modeling clay or cookie dough. Begin by rolling out snake-shaped pieces that can be formed into letter shapes. If you are using cookie dough, be sure shapes like "o", "b" or "R" have plenty of space inside the circle. The circles tend to close up when baked.
- Make a letter scrapbook. Pick a letter of the alphabet and label the page. Cut out pictures from old magazines that begin with that letter. Glue the pictures on the page. Write the words beside the pictures. On rainy days you and your child can make a few pages. Soon you will have a picture dictionary of the whole alphabet.
- Laugh about the mistakes you and your child make. Also don't get discouraged if your child forgets something he knew last week. That's the nature of children.

The activities should be fun for everyone. If you are not enjoying the time together, stop and try something else.

Source: M.R. Binkley, *Becoming a Nation of Readers: What Parents Can Do*, D.C. Heath and Co., March 1988.

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