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AUTHOR Rogers, Norma
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ABSTRACT

This micrcmonograph describes reading readiness and offers suggestions for parents to help their children develop skills and abilities useful for reading. The six sections discuss the following topics: parents' roles and how children learn, toys which build reading readiness, the importance of encouraging children to talk and listen, ways in which to help children develop social and emotional balance, ways tc provide a broad intellectual experience for children, and the importance of reading frequently to children. A brief annotated list of bccks on readiness is included. (TS)

How can I help my child get ready to read?

"How can you stand this mess in your kitchen? There's more flour on the floor and on Suzie than in the mixing bowl."

"It's not easy, but it's worth the trouble because she enjoys it and learns so much from the experience. She knows how to accurately measure the liquids and solids, how to follow directions, and how to count the cookies. Why, she even recognizes the words flour, sugar, salt, and cup."

This mother is taking advantage of a routine home experience to develop skills and abilities that will help her child get ready to read. Reading readiness has been defined as the general stage of developmental maturity and preparedness at which a child can learn to read easily and proficiently in a regular classroom situation. (For a detailed discussion of reading readiness, see "What is Reading Readiness?" another micromonograph in this series.) But this "readiness" begins long before the child starts to school. In fact, you as a parent at home are the most important stimulus in your child's progress toward maturation and preparation for formal school instruction.

Some educators refer to the developmental levels of maturity and preparation as nature and nurture, noting that you can

An ERIC/CRIER + IRA Micromonograph
by Norma Rogers

1972

You'll want to understand how your child learns

encourage your child's natural inherited characteristics (nature) to develop fully by providing the proper environment and training (nurture). If you are aware of the factors that influence your child's growth and development, you can provide experiences which will foster both.

Understanding the parents' role

The home is the greatest educational institution in the country. And reading readiness begins at home! There, you the parents are the teachers, and the most important teachers your child will ever have. In addition, your home provides the setting that educators believe is most conducive to learning. The average home provides far greater opportunities for learning than the average nursery school, and parents who use these resources wisely help prepare their children to read.

Compare the parent-child ratio with the teacher-child ratio—what parent has 25 children? Compare the space per child at home with the space per child at school. Consider the differences in opportunities for a child to have an ongoing project which he doesn't want disturbed, perhaps for days. Observe the tremendous supply of instructional materials and equipment in most homes: books, magazines, newspapers, record players, tape recorders, radios, televisions, clocks, measuring cups and spoons, thermometers, barometers, magnifying glasses, gardens, etc. Think of the many educational excursions a child may take with his parents: trips to the grocery, bank, post office, zoo, airport, etc. At home a child may ask a question any time, and usually someone will listen to what he has to say. He "belongs" at home, and he feels warmth, love, and security—the atmosphere needed for effective learning.

School teachers often say, "If only I had more time to work with John!" But parents have access to almost *all* of a preschool child's time. A parent can function as a private tutor. It is much easier to keep one or two children interested in something than it is to capture the attention of 25 or 30.

Children learn more during their first five years than they will learn in any other period of their lives. These are indeed the "wonder" years, and they are spent at home. Home is the setting where initial speech and language patterns are formed, where meanings for words are learned, where concepts are developed, and where emotional attitudes toward life are acquired. The home provides opportunities to develop physical coordination and good health. Children view the world

through the educational opportunities parents provide them. If they have not had many, varied learning experiences, their concept of the world will be narrow or distorted. If their preschool experiences have been threatening or unpleasant, they will develop a negative attitude. Indeed, a child's entire outlook on life is created in the home environment. How important it is that a child's first experiences in life be appropriate ones, for they set the tone and provide the basis for all of his future learning experiences.

Physical skills and maturity

Large muscle control develops before small muscle control. From the time a child is born, he is developing physical skills. He stretches and turns, pulls and holds, kicks and grabs. A baby needs space for this activity and lots of practice. As his visual-motor coordination grows, he develops more refined skills. He learns to judge the distance between his hand and a toy. He learns to crawl and begins to explore the house. He learns, by experience, what happens when he crawls into a small place, such as between the rungs of a chair or under a bed. As he learns to walk and run, he explores a larger part of his environment. He is impressed by his many experiences, and through them he develops concepts about his world. A child's drive to control his body is so strong that he works at these physical activities and games constantly. Each year he becomes killfull in moving his body through space.

You can select toys to build reading readiness

However, every child is different in physical structure and develops muscular strength and coordination at his own pace. Therefore, you should provide activities that help your child to develop strength and coordination skill at his own rate and to his full inherited capacity. Provide opportunities for his physical development, but don't rush him. If he can't ride his tricycle when he is two years old, let him wait a few months and try again.

Toys

One of the best ways to help your child develop physically is through the proper selection of toys. When you select these toys, consider carefully your child's age, sex, physical and mental abilities, and interests. (Parents often make the mistake of selecting toys which are too advanced for their child.) Toys should be interesting and challenging, but not frustrating. They should be safe, easily cleaned, attractive, and durable. (Look for the Underwriters Laboratories Seal of Approval on electric toys.) Toy manufacturers such as Playskool, Fisher-Price, Sifo, Creative Playthings, Romper Room, and Montessori Motivational Toys offer a wide variety of well-made toys for preschoolers. (Upon request, the companies will send you a catalog.)

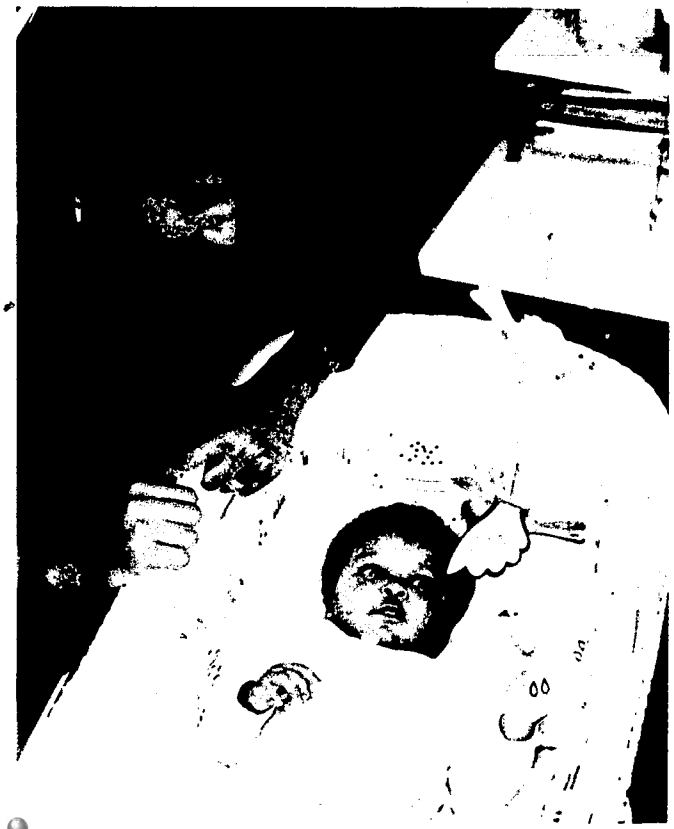
In order to develop their physical coordination skills fully, preschool children need toys which provide opportunities for squeezing, pulling, pushing, stacking, punching, pounding, lifting, balancing, hanging, throwing, dragging, steering, carrying, climbing, rolling, taking apart, and putting together.

Think of your child's muscular coordination needs as you look at the toys and equipment in your home. Then let your imagination go to work. You may be surprised at the wealth of learning materials already available.

Below are some suggestions for toys and activities which develop physical skills and stimulate language growth. Some age guidelines are presented, but they must be taken as general indicators only.

Infants to about one year.

1) Crib mobiles (animals, birds, or geometric designs). At intervals hang colorful, interesting, safe objects such as a cradle gym, cardboard pictures, bells, or rattles from the baby's bed or playpen.
2) Plastic or rubber squeeze toys and toys that bend or stretch easily



3) Small stuffed animals and dolls; small, soft texture ball and texture pad (assorted textures of cloth sewn on a square of rubber matting)
4) Teething toys
5) Bath toys made of smooth plastic or rubber; Busy Bath
6) Musical Busy Box
7) Talking Blocks
8) A short tunnel
9) Pull and push toys
10) Large plastic beads which snap apart and together

One year to about two and one-half. (This is the toddler stage. The usefulness of many of these toys extends to school age.)

1) Various stacking and pounding toys such as a nok-out bench
2) Riding toys without pedals
3) Push and pull toys
4) Hollow wooden or cardboard blocks
5) Dome Climber
6) Large cardboard box to get inside (It can become a car, a plane, a boat, etc.)
7) Form Boards
8) Large round balloons (The two year old will be delighted when you throw the balloon for him to bat with a cardboard tube taken from inside foil or wrapping paper.)
9) Talking telephone
10) Dolls

11) Housekeeping toys and dishes, especially for girls, but good for boys too
12) Large and small rubber balls for rolling, bouncing, and catching; bean bag for throwing and catching
13) Large beads to string
14) Simple puzzles
15) Provide the two year old with opportunities for hopping, jumping, sliding, walking, climbing, swinging, and riding.
16) Tricycles or similar pedal toys may be purchased for some advanced toddlers; however, they are usually more suited to three year olds.

About two and one-half to about four years. (The same toys and equipment suggested for the toddler are still important at this age.) Additional ones are the following:

1) Containers of blocks
2) Slide, swings, bars, ladder, and a small, low balance board (A two-by-four placed on bricks works nicely.)
3) Punching bag (also helpful for relieving frustration)
4) Housekeeping equipment such as table, chairs, brooms, stove, dishes, doll house and furniture
5) Small metal and plastic cars
6) Sandbox and plastic containers, spoons, shovels, etc.
7) Water toys
8) Basket, bucket, or box and a ball to pitch into it
9) Small buildings with people and/or animals such as play farms, airports, and garages.
10) Tunnel of Fun

About four to about six years or more. The suggestions for the younger child are just as applicable to this age group. However, this age child will use them more creatively and with a more sustained attention span. Swimming, turning somersaults, playing leap-frog, hopping on one foot, playing kick ball and four-square are fine physical activities for this group. A child this age loves to build things. Toys such as Tinkertoys and Lincoln Logs are very useful.

Small muscle control, which is essential for reading and writing activities taught at school, should be emphasized now. This control requires a high degree of visual skill and concentration which may cause children to tire easily at first, so regulate developmental activities according to the child's ability to benefit from them. Before he tires, allow him to stop.

The following activities and toys are suggested:

1) Beads of macaroni to string and create designs with; toys which require lacing, snapping, buttoning, twisting, etc.; yarn and sewing cards (Use materials found at home for these activities or purchase them, if you prefer.)
2) Puzzles which are challenging; pegs and pegboards
3) Modeling clay—it can be bought or made at home
4) Crayons, paints (watercolors and tempera), paper, and coloring books
5) Commercial or homemade books with activities that require cutting, punching, pasting, or folding
6) Dolls which can be taken apart, bathed, dressed, and undressed
7) Small race cars and a track
8) Fit-a-space, see'n say toys, take-apart toys, and spirographs (These toys are great for developing perception of size, shape, height, and proportion as well as muscle control.)
9) Activities involving mixing, stirring, measuring, and pouring. Let your child watch and help you bake cookies or cakes (Explain every procedure.)
10) Under proper supervision, hammer, nails, saw, and scrap lumber provide opportunities for construction.
11) Some free or inexpensive items which make delightful toys and furnish valuable learning activities are empty boxes, egg cartons, paper bags, plastic bottles, popsicle

sticks, toothpicks, old buttons, scraps of fabric, and junk mail. Try coloring, stringing, and glueing macaroni. Make sock and sack puppets. Make dolls from bottles and spools and dress them. Paste a pretty picture on cardboard, then cut it up for a puzzle. Make sewing cards with cardboard and a paper punch.

Developing good speech and language patterns

Since words are the tools for thinking and communicating with others, it is very important that skill in using language be highly developed. Children learn the speech they hear: they learn best by example, so we ought to provide the right examples for them. The home is a perfect setting for developing a child's speech and language proficiencies and for correcting (in the right way) bad habits.

Some ways you may help in the development of good speech habits are listed below.

1) From birth, talk to your child lovingly and softly, taking care to speak naturally but to enunciate sounds clearly. Describe what you see, hear, feel, smell, and taste. He needs a label for every experience so he can communicate well.
2) Listen with interest when your child wants to tell you something. (Some parents make the mistake of listening attentively to a child who is just beginning to talk, then ignoring him when he is five or six years old. He needs continued practice to refine his language facility.)
3) Don't nag or interrupt a child when he is speaking, but do make an effort to correct speech defects casually by pronouncing correctly the difficult words. For example, when a child says, "Mommy, I wided in da cah," you can say, "So you rode in the car. How nice."
4) Read good stories, poems, and jingles to your child regularly. Buy some of the good records of children's songs, stories, and nursery rhymes. Children love repetition of the type you find in such nursery rhymes as "Over in the Meadow" and "Polly Put the Kettle On."
5) Don't regard incorrect speech as "cute" or encourage baby talk. However, don't expect perfect speech from preschoolers either. Some children will not enunciate certain difficult sounds properly until they are seven or eight years old (/z/, /j/, /r/, and /s/, for example).
6) Consult the school speech therapist for suggestions of activities that can be used at home to improve a child's speech.
7) Encourage your child to notice the likenesses and differences in speech sounds or similar words. Rhymes and finger plays help oral expression. Nursery rhymes such as "Little Miss Muffet" or "Jack be Nimble" encourage and stimulate a child's curiosity about sounds and rhyming words, and repetition will help him commit them to memory.

8) Use simple stories and riddles to stimulate quick, accurate thinking. For example, "I swim in water and hop on land. Who am I?"
9) Use add-on or open-end stories to provide interesting plot twists, to stimulate creative thinking, and to provide opportunities for meaningful oral language expression for the four and five year old.
10) Encourage dramatic play puppets, bendable family dolls, old dressup clothes, doctor or hospital kits, a play store, and a play telephone.
11) Encourage your child to discuss events or experiences with you (a fight in the yard, a drive to the park, etc.). Try to reinforce good language usage by praising or rewarding the child in some way. This will encourage him to talk more. This additional practice will reinforce the correct usage of speech which will, in turn, bring adult approval and a feeling of adequacy and self-satisfaction.
12) Talk and sing in soft pleasing tones, and when your youngster responds, always show approval. Language, along with experiences, increases his drive to communicate with you. Help him express his feelings correctly by naming or discussing sensations for him (The diaper is *wet*; the stove is *hot*; ice is *cold*; the knife is *sharp*; the pillow is *soft.*)

Developing listening skills

Good listening skills are essential for good speech, vocabulary development, and general language proficiency. Because speech and hearing are so related, you are urged to have your child's hearing checked if speech is delayed or severely defective. If a child does not hear clearly, he may not speak clearly. But regardless of his speaking and hearing ability, any child must learn to listen carefully, and there are many ways you can promote good listening habits. These ways include following the previous suggestions for developing speech and language facility. Other suggestions are listed below.

Encourage your child to talk and listen

1) Teach your child to listen and identify important sounds such as a bird singing, a car coming, a roaring airplane, a dishwasher, running water, a ticking clock, a barking dog, a meowing cat, a ringing bell, special voices, etc. This makes a good game. Blindfold him or have him close his eyes and try to identify certain sounds. Say, "Listen to that noise. What is it?"
2) Give simple directions. At first, ask the child to perform one (familiar) task. Then gradually add another and another as he is able to remember them. This develops alert listening and auditory memory For example, you can say, "David, close the door." When he can remember one direction, give him two. "David, pick up your shoes and then bring me the paper." Later you may say, "David, pick up your socks, bring me your shoes, and turn off the television." When he can remember three actions to perform from verbal instruction, he has developed his auditory memory as well as that of the average beginning reader.
3) Ask your three-year-old child to deliver messages to other members of the family. For example, "Tell Sue that Mommy said to do her homework and practice her violin."
4) Mimic the sound of animals, birds, machines, etc. (For example, show the picture of a duck to an eighteen month old and ask, "What does the duck say?")
5) Set the proper example. Your child will listen to you if you listen to him. Don't ignore him.
6) Keep the number of distracting noises at a minimum when having a conversation with your child.
7) Give your child a specific reason to listen. For example, you might ask him to identify a sound (thunder, airplane, rain, wind, etc.).
8) If you have a tape recorder, use it to record your child's voice as well as other sounds. (He will enjoy hearing his own voice.)
9) Provide records, television, and story books of all kinds to stimulate listening, vocabulary, and language growth.
10) Play "Sound Alikes" and "Start Alikes" when your youngster is ready (about age five). Say, "I'm thinking of a word that sounds like (rhymes with) *head,* and I sleep in it. What is it?" Or say, "Let's name all the words we know that start with the same sound as *bed.*" Then you can take the initiative and (exaggerating the initial sound)

say *b-bite, b-ball, b-beam,* etc. When he gets the idea, progress to another letter sound, then another.

11) Talk to your child about the importance of listening carefully and remembering important directions or instructions. Explain how much can be learned when he really listens to find out something (Television commercials indicate that many people do not listen well.)
12) Help your child evaluate the validity of statements made to him by other children. (For example, "Sue said she saw a pair of shoes walking down the hall the other night.")
13) Expose four, five and six year olds to riddles, games, and simple jokes. They love them.
14) Discuss the sounds of the home, the park, the supermarket.
15) Challenge your child to repeat words, then phrases, and finally verses of a poem as he is able to remember longer and longer series of words.
16) Play simple games such as, "Simon Says," "Fruit Basket," and "May I?" which require some attention to directions.

Developing visual skills

Reading requires a high degree of visual skill, and you have many opportunities to help your child develop good visual discrimination and visual memory. Before a baby learns to talk he knows the difference between such items as a ball and a rattle, milk and fruit, coat and hat, television and radio, shoes and socks, because Mother has talked about them. She may have said, "Let's take your shoes off. Now your socks." At other times, she talked about his toys, pointing out one or two. In any case, she helped him to understand what a particular object looked like and that it was different from other objects. Babies eight months and older love to please Mother by picking up the correct object when she says, "Where is the ball? Where is your bottle?"

What the small child sees is reinforced through the other sensory channels of touch, taste, smell, and hearing. (Through responsive language we can evaluate what he is learning.) As he learns to discriminate between pictures, shapes, colors, and specific details of objects, he is developing readiness to note the differences in geometric designs, letters, and words: skills necessary for reading.

You should continually identify and point out certain people, animals, objects, toys, and food in meaningful situations. The average home presents many excellent opportunities for doing this, thus providing ways to develop your child's visual skills. A few suggestions are listed for the two to six year old.

1) Blocks, buttons, spools, etc. may be sorted by color, size, or shape.

2) Jigsaw puzzles may be bought or made.
3) Details of clothing such as the buttons, front and back, color, sleeves, zipper, etc. can be pointed out.
4) Specific animals, insects, flowers, leaves, and food can be discussed. How are they alike? How are they different?
5) Objects can be labeled, compared, and contrasted; this helps your child remember them. Give him words and meanings to identify and describe items properly, such as *round, square, long, short, dark, light, little, big, straight, curved, thick, thin, high, low, over, under, smooth,* and *rough.*
6) Items can be matched. Washcloths, earrings, socks, knives and forks, canned goods, etc. can be matched by color, size, or design. (Helping Mother also develops a sense of self-worth.)

Developing social and emotional maturity

The home is the greatest influence in a child's life. He spends most of his time there, interacts with family members, and usually adopts their language patterns and values; his self-concept will likely reflect theirs.

I recall once hearing a great educator tell about his family being evicted from their home. Even though he was a small boy when it happened, he felt very degraded and embarrassed. As he sat by the side of the road his mother came up to him and said emphatically, "Stand up, son. You are somebody, and don't you forget it." This mother instilled in her children a sense of self-worth. All through his life this man said he refused to be beaten down, to give up, to fail, because he knew he was "somebody," and this meant he was an important human being. All children need to establish an identity for themselves and a sense of their own importance. This basic concept of self-worth provides the foundation for healthy emotional and social development.

Children need to feel loved, wanted, and accepted. Every child deserves a chance to grow mentally, physically, emotionally, and socially to the limits of his capacity. He has a right to a

Help give your child social and emotional balance

secure home, to loving parents, to proper care and protection, to fairness, to discipline, to understanding, and to teaching. More than 2,000 years ago Socrates said: "Could I climb to the highest place in Athens, I would lift my voice and proclaim: 'Fellow citizens, why do you turn and scrape every stone to gather wealth and take so little care of your children to whom one day you must relinquish it all?' "

From the moment of birth a baby begins to learn about his new environment. When his hunger is satisfied, when he is kept warm and comfortable, handled gently and lovingly, he begins to feel secure. When he cries and Mother comes, he knows she cares.

As the child grows and develops some independence in maneuvering around, eating, entertaining himself and others, he feels that he is an important part of the family.

Children who are insecure, unwanted, poorly cared for, and little taught are likely to be emotionally unstable and socially inadequate. They do not possess the self-confidence which comes from self-reliance, and they have little self-esteem.

Children who come to school with problems of this nature need many opportunities to grow socially and emotionally before they can profit from reading instruction.

Some guidelines for helping children grow socially and emotionally are listed below.

1) Let your child know he is loved and appreciated.
2) Provide opportunities for him to be with other children from time to time.
3) Provide responsibilities, suitable to his ability, to develop a feeling of self-worth. Challenge but do not frustrate. Don't let your child experience failure unnecessarily. (A two year old can put blocks back into a box with help. A four year old can dress himself.)
4) Be consistent in placing limits on your child. (Don't think his behavior is cute one time and scold him the next time.)
5) Encourage your child. Enjoy his successes and be there to help when the going gets rough.
6) Provide many success experiences for your child.
7) As parents, try to demonstrate attitudes of gentleness, happiness, curiosity, and satisfaction, and your children will likely follow your example.

You can provide broad intellectual experience

8) Provide a quiet place where your child can go to think, rest, or work alone.
9) Avoid too many frustrating experiences and help him cope with frustration in acceptable ways (punching clown, modeling clay, etc.).
10) Discipline when the need arises. It clears the air. A child then feels he has paid the debt and is relieved of guilt feelings. (Many serious emotional problems are caused by guilt feelings which cannot be dismissed from the mind.)
11) Provide opportunities for role playing by having old clothes, puppets, toy telephones, etc. available.

Remember, a child's self-image is built through the attitudes demonstrated toward him by those close to him. He sees himself as he thinks others see him. His self-concept will affect his behavior, his motivation, and his ability to live up to his potential. If he has self-confidence, he will move ahead, explore, try new things, and attempt to solve his everyday problems. If he doubts himself (caused by too much defeat, discouragement, criticism), he will be so insecure that he may be frightened to meet the demands of growing up. We must balance criticism and scolding with praise for successes and always assure a child that he is loved even when he does wrong. Have patience with your child, and he will learn to be patient.

Developing intellectual skills

Research has shown that intellectual stimulation or lack of it during the first years of life greatly influences a child's intelligence and behavior as an adult. Head Start programs were instigated to offset the lack of intellectual stimulation by providing varied learning experiences for deprived children. These programs are based on the knowledge that intellectual development is related to a child's total growth pattern, a fact that you also can utilize as you work with your child.

Early learning takes place through the sensory channels (touch, taste, smell, seeing, and hearing), and babies and small children seem to have a built-in desire to use as many of the senses as possible in every learning situation. They learn most by the "discovery" method through contact with real things. For example, a baby learns many concepts about milk long before he has words to describe it. He knows how it looks and tastes, that it feels wet like water, that it can be warm or cold, and that others like it too.

Watch your baby experiment with any new toy you give him. Notice how he feels its surface and shape; shakes, squeezes, or drops it to see if it makes a noise; and puts it into his mouth to see if it has taste. All of his initial experiences with objects will follow somewhat the same "discovery" method. As the number of similar experiences grows, he will not repeat the same sensory inquiries because he will have many previously learned concepts stored in his memory.

A common object around the house, such as an orange, furnishes opportunities for multisensory learnings. A baby first learns through tasting its juice; he feels its firm texture and round shape; and he later notices that it can be peeled, sliced, juiced, and frozen. As he grows older he discovers that it is a flavoring in candy, soft drinks, popsicles, and sherbet and that its color is duplicated in paint, crayons, clothing, and other articles.

Let your child experiment and explore using as many of the senses as possible, for he will be developing the basic learning that he will need in the future. These basic experiences provide the information he uses when he groups or categorizes ideas and forms generalizations. For instance, he learns that some objects are strictly for eating and others for play; that an orange is round and a ball is round but that they have little else in common. As he grows physically, his storehouse of knowledge grows, and he gradually begins to be the master of [illegible]ronment.

Talk to your baby about what you are doing or what is happening. Sing to him and let him learn to listen to good, simple music. Read to him and show him pictures in books and magazines when he is only a few months old. However, when he is tired or ready to change activities, do so immediately.

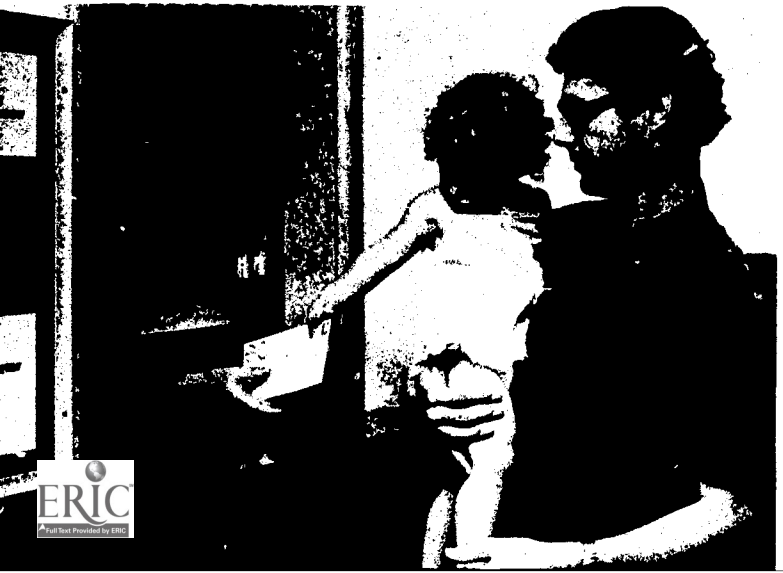
Stimulate and satisfy your child's curiosity, but do not pressure or annoy him. Call him by name often to help him establish his own identity.

A child's first experience with language is hearing the sounds (words) which label people, things, and events. In turn, his jabbering represents his attempts to reproduce the sounds of the language he hears. Gradually he learns to talk, and this new means of communication opens many learning experiences. He asks, "What's that?" and "Why?" continuously, and he learns from the answers he gets. He constantly re-enacts what he is learning through play. Every new experience is now adding new words to his speaking vocabulary and broadening his concepts.

When your child can speak in complete sentences (usually between age two and three) you can help him increase his speaking and meaning vocabulary by comparing or contrasting something he knows with something which is new to him. (A river is like a big, big creek. A pipe is like a little tunnel.) Give him many contrasting terms to use such as *little* and *big, day*

and *night, good* and *bad, happy* and *sad, asleep* and *awake, slow* and *fast, pretty* and *ugly, mine* and *yours, go* and *come, stop* and *go.*

Take your youngster on short excursions to the grocery store, library, post office, park, lake, bank, police station, fire station, bakery, laundromat, airport, museum, circus, dairy, zoo, farm, etc. A two-hour trip is long enough for the three and four year old, but the five and six year old usually can enjoy a longer trip without getting too tired. Before going on a trip explain where you are going and what you will see.



Encourage your youngster to ask questions and discuss interesting parts of the trip.

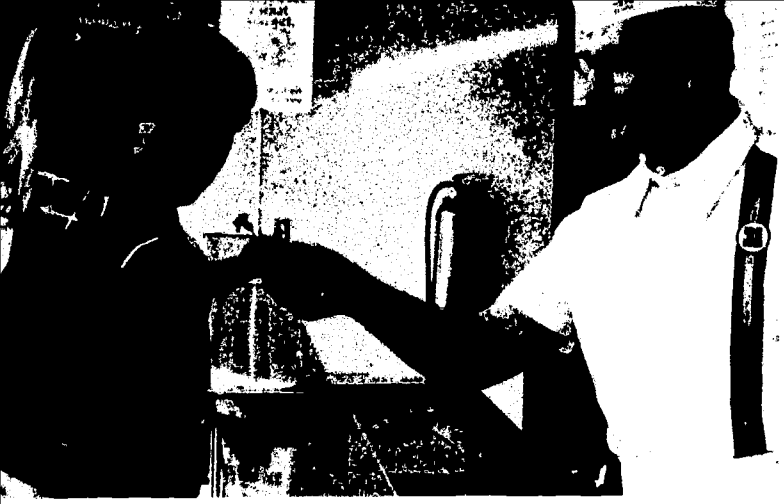
If possible, read a story about a similar excursion before going and after returning home. Encourage him to talk about what he saw and heard. This gives you an opportunity to provide interesting facts, correct any misconceptions he may have gotten, and reinforce the meanings of the new words he has heard. When driving or walking, talk to a three to five year old about the route you take. Ask your youngster to tell what he saw, in order, at the grocery store, park, zoo, etc.

There are many interesting, intellectually stimulating materials and activities which can be provided at home, in addition to those mentioned in earlier paragraphs. These suggestions are most appropriate for the three to six year old.

1) A large magnet. A child soon learns which objects are attracted and which are not.
2) A large neighborhood map. You can make one on butcher paper and mark your house, the school, and other familiar places.
3) A globe. He learns the shape and relative size of our country as well as the oceans, etc. Home serves as a point of reference and stimulates many questions about the world in meaningful context.
4) A calendar. Help your child to gain some concept of time

by using a calendar to measure the days, weeks, months, and years. Mark important dates such as birthdays, holidays, vacations, and visits. (This is excellent for gaining insight into number sets based on seven [a week] and 30 or 31 [a month].)

5) A large clock. A child soon learns that peoples' lives are governed by the clock. (Time to get up, time for a nap, time to eat, time to play, time for Daddy to come home, time for "Sesame Street," etc.) Teach him to read the numerals.
6) Two thermometers, one mounted inside and one outside, and a barometer. Help him see that the mercury goes up when it gets warmer and down when it gets cooler. A barometer is interesting to use when observing changes in the weather. (It's fun to predict the weather.)
7) Scales. Simple scales provide opportunities to measure and compare weights.
8) A ruler and a ball of string or a tape measure. Show him how to measure and compare his height, his bed, a table, etc.
9) Musical instruments such as a drum, horn, triangle, xylophone, cymbals, and toy piano. These provide hours of role-playing.
10) Blocks. The blocks you bought for your child earlier can be arranged in various patterns, and he can copy the pattern with identical blocks. (Begin with only three or four, then progress to a more difficult arrangement.) This builds visual perception and memory.
11) Money. Teach him the names for pennies, nickels, dimes, quarters, and dollars. Furnish a bank for him, and let him buy at the store at times. Let him learn that it takes only one nickel to buy the same amount of candy that five pennies buy. Teach one-to-one correspondence by placing



one penny by each piece of candy. An abacus is a great toy for counting also.

12) Pets. If possible let your youngster learn about a pet first hand. In caring for it he will learn about its needs for food and water as well as the birth and death cycle. Consider a dog or cat if possible, but if space doesn't permit, try hamsters, gerbils, fish, turtles, or a parakeet.
13) Magnetic board with plastic letters and numerals. When he is interested, teach him the arrangements of letters which mean *his name, stop, go, bed,* etc; Use a picture cue beside the word. As he asks, teach the names of the letters and numerals.
14) Cuisenaire Rods (Parent Kit from the Cuisenaire Company of America, 12 Church Street, New Rochelle, New York 10805). This kit offers a delightful way to learn math concepts by playing games with different colored rods.
15) Television. There are several regular children's programs such as "Sesame Street" and "Captain Kangaroo" which are excellent for preschoolers. Check your local television listings.
16) Use the record player mentioned earlier to teach not only musical tunes, rhythms and timing, but also children's literature, science, math, and history. Records can be played while waiting for dinner or preparing for nap time. (See the suggested list of children's records at the end of this pamphlet.)
17) Show that the seasons tell the time of year. Teach your child what to expect at each season. For example, spring brings warm sunny days, changes in plant life, rain, worms, bugs, and a change in the way we dress and the things we do for recreation. Let him plant seeds or plants and watch them grow.
18) Celebrate and explain about birthdays, Halloween, Thanksgiving, Christmas, Valentine's Day, Easter, Independence Day, and other familiar holidays.
19) Explain as the occasion arises the different modes of

transportation, the various ways people make a living (those who work in producing goods and services), and the different homes and customs people have. (People live in houses, apartments, igloos, windmills, houseboats, mud and straw huts, etc.)

20) Capture a spider and watch it spin a web. Watch a butterfly emerge from a chrysalis. Observe the busy ants when you give them something to eat.

21) Help him develop good health habits by explaining why he should wash his hands before eating and why he should not eat after others. Give him the names and categories for all types of food. (Apples, oranges, and grapefruits are fruits; but peas, potatoes, and corn are vegetables.)

22) Let your preschooler watch and, when possible, help you cook. Baking cakes and cookies, shelling peas, snapping beans, and chopping nuts are great fun. When possible let him measure some of the ingredients. Setting the table, unpacking the groceries, and bringing the mail are also fun activities.

23) Count everything. (Money, cards, spoons, people, steps, pieces of candy, and bottles of pop.) Let him divide the cookies or candy among the children.

24) Use directions such as *right* and *left* when talking to your preschooler. "Let's put your left shoe on first." If your four or five year old has established his "handedness" and is right-handed say, "You write with your right hand and what is left is your left." Put a piece of tape or a ring on one hand to help him remember which hand is which. When writing or reading to your child, occasionally run your finger across the lines from left to right.

25) Help him build concepts by guessing opposities or relationships like the following:

Above all, read to your child frequently

Sugar is sweet, but a lemon is _____? (sour)
An airplane is fast, but a horse is _____? (slow)
A dog runs on its legs, but a car runs on _____? (wheels)

26) Show how water can be changed from a liquid to a solid (ice) and that steam from the teakettle is water in the form of a gas. Observe the condensation on the outside of a milk carton after taking it out of the refrigerator.
27) Let your youngster see how many different things you read, such as the telephone book, recipes, letters, catalogs, magazines, newspapers, books, signs, directions on cans, packages, and toys. He will learn how useful and pleasurable the skill of reading is to you.
28) Encourage your three to five year old to color, draw, and scribble. Let him trace on dotted lines with colorful felt pens basic shapes, designs, and letters if he wants to. When he asks, tell him the names of the letters and let him trace or copy them. When he wants to know what a word is, tell him. Many four and five year olds can read the name of the grocery store, their street, their favorite television program; stop and go signs; "Burger Chef;" and others.
29) Investigate the new Montessori Motivational Toys (Order catalog from Doylestown, Pennsylvania). They represent some of the finest, newest toys that "teach" for the two-and-one-half-year-old and older child.

Reading to your child

There is so much pleasure in books. (See *What Books and Records Should I Get For My Preschooler?* another micro-monograph in this series.) Children can learn very early that practically anything they might want to know has been written in a book and that it can probably be found in their home or city library. Many parents begin reading and showing pictures to their baby when he is only three or four months old. The pleasure of being held, listening to Mother's voice, and seeing the colorful pictures promotes a good, warm inner feeling and stimulates his sense of hearing, seeing, and touch. Cloth picture books or books with textures are appropriate for this age. As the child grows older, picture books of animals, people, nursery rhymes, and simple stories are interesting. Be sure that pictures are large and colorful and that there are very few words on each page. As he grows older and his attention span increases, select books with more reading. Always talk about the pictures and ask him to show you "the dog's house," "the cow's ears," etc.

Most parents find that just before or after naptime and before bedtime are the most appropriate times for reading to their child. However, if this isn't convenient for you, choose any time that your child is receptive. Don't take him away from an interesting activity with "It's time to read a story." Make all of his experiences with books happy ones. Children who learn to enjoy books early in life accumulate a vast amount of knowledge and understanding and have an enjoyable pastime.

Read to your child in a soft clear voice, using appropriate tones and expressions to portray the mood of the story. Don't fret if your child wants the same book read over and over. The high interest and the repetition will be good for him. Some children hear a book so often that they memorize it and can "read" it all by themselves.

The library is a marvelous place and should be visited often, but your child needs some special books to call his very own. When selecting books for your preschooler, always consider his needs (e.g., a forthcoming tonsilectomy), interests, and maturity level.

Babies love books with big bright pictures of familiar toys, people, animals, and flowers. They love to feel the textured material often placed in books for infants and toddlers. Many books are made of cloth and heavy cardboard and cannot be torn easily. The big picture books published by Golden Press, Hallmark, Inc., and Children's Press are especially nice.

Children aged one and two love to see pictures and hear the names of every picture. They will point and mimic the sounds you make. They will love the repetition, and it will aid retention. A few babies (under two years) will listen to stories if they are short and beautifully illustrated, but for the most part, they enjoy "picture" books and short nursery rhymes.

Two and three year olds love nursery rhymes, word play, and rhythms. Animal stories are especially interesting to this age as they seem to relate to stories about animals as well as to stories about children.

Three, four, and five year olds love stories of fantasy and real life. Both types of reading are important to stretch their imagination and to develop important concepts which will help them understand their world better. The books (usually fiction) for beginning readers are also good for the preschooler and often trigger a start in reading at home. Harper and Row has published several excellent series of this type: *I Can Read Books, I Can Read Science Books, I Can Read History Books, Early I Can Read Books,* etc.

The *Let's Read and Find Out* Science Book Series published by Crowell and *The True Book* Series published by Children's Press are very good for building science concepts.

The very excellent book, *How to Parent* by Dr. Fitzhugh Dodson has a fine recommended list of books for preschoolers in the appendix. The purchasing department at your local bookstore will assist you in ordering books.

The following "do's" and "don'ts" summarize the general principles you may follow in helping your child get ready to read and in helping him to become a happy, well-adjusted adult.

Do's:

Do love and enjoy your child.
Do help him to feel that he is wanted and loved and that he is an important part of family life.
Do encourage him to be self-reliant (zip a coat, dress, brush teeth, etc.).
Do teach him to listen attentively and follow simple directions.
Do talk to your child from birth, softly, gently, and lovingly, but don't use baby talk.
Do answer his questions, simply and directly.
Do teach an awareness of things around him (wind, noise, weather, people, etc.).
Do help him to express himself well orally. Give him the correct names for things.
Do read to your child regularly and help him to love books and to develop a desire to learn to read.
Do build up his background of experiences through conversations, books, games, pictures, trips, etc.
Do consult a specialist if you suspect that any serious physical, emotional, or mental problems exist.

Don't's:

Don't show worry or anxiety about your child.
Don't be too critical of him.
Don't remove every frustration; he must learn to cope with some.
Don't overemphasize learning tasks such as reading. Children must not feel pressured by tense, worried, and overanxious parents.
Don't compare him with other brothers and sisters or friends.
Don't have unrealistic expectations for him.

If you'd like to read more on readiness:

Anderson, Verna Dieckman. *Reading and Young Children.* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1968) 443 p.

Reviews the various concepts of reading, the nature of our language, how reading begins, simple diagnosis of reading problems, and current research relating to beginning reading.

Arbuthnot, May Hill. *Children's Reading in the Home.* (Glenview, Illinois: Scott, Foresman and Company, 1969) 356 p.

Describes a good home environment for reading, suggests ways to promote lasting interest in books, and discusses specific books according to very general age levels and interest.

Beck, Joan. *How to Raise a Brighter Child.* (New York: Trident Press, 1967) 260 p.

Suggests many ways parents may enhance their preschooler's educational background and encourages them to consider teaching their children to read.

Dodson, Fitzhugh. *How to Parent.* (Los Angeles: Nash Publishing, 1970) 418 p. Also available in paperback without illustrations.

Presents authoritative, common-sense suggestions for helping children achieve intellectual and emotional maturity. Written and illustrated with a delightful humor which makes it most pleasurable to read. A must for every parent.

Ginott, Dr. Haim G. *Between Parent and Child.* (New York: Avon Books, 1965) paperback, 248 p.

Considers in depth, methods of handling discipline problems in the home and provides many helpful ideas for relating to and communicating with children.

Isaacs, Susan. *The Nursery Years: The Mind of the Child from Birth to Six Years.* (Schacken, 1968) paperback, 134 p.

Traces the intellectual development of a child from birth to age six and offers guidelines for parents to follow. This delightful book is not so well known in the United States because it was published in England.

Larrick, Nancy. *A Parent's Guide to Children's Reading.* (Garden City: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1969, 3rd edition) 348 p.

Suggests specific books and magazines which have particular appeal to youngsters of various ages and reviews current practices in teaching reading.

Todd, Vivian Edmiston and Hefferman, Helen. The Years Before School, Guiding Preschool Children. (London: The MacMillan Company, 1970) 658p.

Provides parents and teachers of preschool children with methods of developing and enriching their lives. Also suggests books and experiences to fill the specific needs of young children. Highly recommended.

Some Questions for Thought and Discussion

What does the term "reading readiness" mean to you? Discuss several aspects of readiness.

Discuss the parents' role as teachers of the preschool child. Why is it so important?

What considerations should you give to purchasing toys for your youngster?

Give some specific examples of ways to help a preschooler develop good listening skills.

Discuss some of the ways you can help in the development of visual skills at home.

Review the importance of developing a healthy self-concept. What are some guidelines for helping children grow emotionally and socially?

What is the "discover method of learning?" Why is this the most important way for babies and small children to learn?

Present some common objects around the house and discuss ways to use them in teaching a concept. (Example: ball, ice, measuring cups, piano, various foods, etc.)

Propose some simple guidelines for developing an interest in books and reading. Relate them to your own home, school, library, etc.

The International Reading Association attempts, through its publications, to provide a forum for a wide spectrum of opinion on reading. This policy permits divergent viewpoints without assuming the endorsement of the Association.

This micromonograph was prepared pursuant to a contract with the Office of Education, U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. Contractors undertaking such projects under Government sponsorship are encouraged to express freely their judgment in professional and technical matters. Points of view or opinions do not, therefore, necessarily represent official Office of Education position or policy. This ERIC/CRIER + IRA micromonograph is one a series designed by the Clearinghouse on Reading to answer for parents questions about their child's reading development.

James L. Laffey, series editor Billie Strunk, publications editor
Bruce J. Tone, director of publications

Copies of this publication can be ordered from:

International Reading Association
Six Tyre Avenue
Newark, Delaware 19711