



Encouraging Your Child to

# READ

ENCOURAGE HER TO WRITE HER OWN NAME

talk about the letters and sounds

Talk to your baby

monitor your child's computer and television time

Challenge your child

FIND KID-FRIENDLY MAGAZINES

Read and reread

talk, read, and play together

POINT OUT WORDS ON SIGNS

show how proud you are

**“ Developing a lifelong love of reading is a foundation for success in school and happiness in life.”**

The love of reading can and should begin for children in their earliest days and continue throughout their years in school and on into their adult lives. Becoming a strong and confident reader is a necessary skill, no matter what path a child's life takes. Literacy is as important to a growing child as nutrition, exercise, fresh air, and a loving home. Developing a lifelong love of reading is a foundation for success in school and happiness in life.

The vital importance of literacy is a central underlying theme in the film *WAITING FOR "SUPERMAN."* Daisy, one of the children in the film, wants to be a veterinarian. When asked how she got the idea, Daisy answers, "Because I read books." That simple, beautiful statement sums up how crucial the ability to read — and take pleasure in reading — is for everyone.

This pocket guide, created by faculty members at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, is brought to you by the producers of *WAITING FOR "SUPERMAN"* in cooperation with Reach Out and Read, which prepares America's youngest children to succeed in school by partnering with doctors to prescribe books and encourage families to read together.

We believe this booklet can contribute to major reform, so that all our children can become superheroes — and super readers.

Happy reading!

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- Uses her voice to express her feelings (laughing, crying)
- Imitates speech by saying things like “na-na, da-da”
- Understands several simple phrases
- At 1 year, can say one or more words
- Looks at books

## WHAT TO KNOW:

- Babies learn language while being held and cared for by adults who repeat words to them; tell them stories; laugh and smile with them; and respond to their noises, smiles, and burps.
- When you read to your baby, she’s learning. Plus, she begins to connect reading with what she loves most — being with you!

## HOW TO HELP:

- Talk to your baby! Repeat nursery rhymes, sing songs, play peek-a-boo, and respond to her needs with soothing words.
- Take advantage of everyday moments to talk about the world around you. Tell her stories while she is being changed, in the bath, in her stroller, or being held. She needs to hear your voice and learn about things that she sees.
- Read board books with faces, animals, and objects that you can talk about with your baby, then add lift-the-flap books when reading with your 1-year-old.
- When talking to your child, use the language(s) that are most comfortable for you, so that she hears lots of different words and ideas.



- At 2 years, can say 250–350 words
- At 3 years, can say 800–1000 words
- Says common rhymes, imitates the tone and sounds of adults speaking, and asks to be read to
- Enjoys listening to predictable, familiar books and joins in when it is time to say a repeated phrase in the story

## WHAT TO KNOW:

- Children become “readers” before they learn to read. Enjoying books together now will help them enjoy books later.
- When children have lots of opportunities to talk and listen, they are building important language skills.

## HOW TO HELP:

- Listen to your child talk and encourage her to say more. Ask her questions, show interest in what she says, and help her learn new words and ideas.
- When you are with your child, limit distractions like phone calls and television. Instead, talk, read, and play together. Consider borrowing books from the library.
- Make books a part of the daily routine. Special reading time might be before bed, during a meal, or while you are riding the bus.
- Give your child paper and crayons so she can “write.” Ask her to explain what is happening in her picture or story. Help her think of more ideas to add.



- Comfortably uses sentences, plays with words, and learns from conversations and books that are read aloud
- Recognizes familiar letters and words such as her name — and attempts to write them
- Identifies words that rhyme or have the same beginning sound
- Holds a book right-side-up, turns the pages, and understands that pages are read from left to right and from top to bottom

## WHAT TO KNOW:

- Learning lots of words from birth helps to make preschoolers readers for life.
- Children become “writers” before they learn to write. Children’s scribbles, pictures, and attempts at writing alphabet letters are all important beginnings to strong literacy skills.

## HOW TO HELP:

- When reading together, encourage your child to talk. Have her “pretend read” the parts she has memorized. Ask her questions and encourage her to say more. Eventually, she might tell more of the story than you do!
- Point out words on signs and talk about the letters and sounds. Ask your child to find letters she knows on menus or street signs.
- Link the books you read to people, places, and things your child knows or sees when you’re out.
- Play with words and sounds by singing, reading, and making up rhymes together. Call attention to words that have similar sounds (“Dad and dance both start with the same sound, d-d-d-d dad, d-d-d-d dance!”)
- Have your child tell you stories, and write down what she says. Ask questions that will help her complete the story. Then, read the story you wrote together.



- At 5 years, can say 3000–5000 words, speaks using complex and compound sentences, and starts to match letters with sounds
- At 6 years, starts to read words on the page and make predictions while reading, using knowledge, pictures, and text
- At 7 years, starts to read words automatically, and expands knowledge by listening to and reading books

## WHAT TO KNOW:

- Positive reading experiences encourage more reading. The more children read, the better they will read.
- Early readers can build their confidence and abilities by re-reading books they are very familiar with. Repetition is good!
- Reading and talking about nonfiction — not just storybooks — helps younger children learn information and skills that they need for academic success in upper grades.

## HOW TO HELP:

- Read and reread your child's favorite books — electronic or print — and, eventually, she will be able to read them to you.
- Listen to your child read and tell you stories. Then, have a conversation about them.
- Play board games and card games and talk about what's happening as you play.
- Limit and monitor your child's computer and television time. During screen time, help choose programs that will both interest her and build knowledge. Ask what she has learned, and find books on these subjects at the local library.
- Expose your child to new things and information by taking her to a museum, the zoo, or a different neighborhood. Encourage her to talk about what she sees.





- At 8 years, reads chapter books and is now learning an estimated 3,000 words per year
- At 9 years, can read aloud and silently, and understand what is read
- At 10 years, begins to identify the themes in a text

## WHAT TO KNOW:

- The words we use in conversation are different from the words we see in books. Students need to understand this academic language in order to succeed in school.
- Starting in grade 4, children are expected to “read to learn” — to gain information from books independently.
- Children need encouragement, praise, and patience, especially when they are struggling in school.

## HOW TO HELP:

- Hang maps or other word-filled posters. Hang her school-work to show how proud you are and emphasize the importance of working hard at school.
- Challenge your child by reading aloud books or stories from the newspaper — electronic or print — that she cannot read on her own and by introducing her to new ideas and topics.
- Keep what your child enjoys reading around the house. Many children enjoy kid-friendly magazines that you can find at your library or order by mail.
- Talk to your child’s teacher. Learn about classroom work and how you can help at home.



- **Chooses things to read that she wants to talk and write about**
- **Understands how authors think**
- **Can compare points of view and ideas from different books on the same topic**
- **Learns new information while reading, to develop her ideas and knowledge**
- **Can experience success when reading about subjects that are familiar and interesting to her, even when she struggles with school reading**

## WHAT TO KNOW:

- Many children lose interest in reading during middle school. Finding reading material every day that captures their interest can help them continue to build knowledge and skills.
- Vocabulary growth is critical throughout middle school to prepare for understanding high school textbooks.
- Many children need extra support as reading requirements increase during these years.

## HOW TO HELP:

- Talk with your child about what is in the news, or what is happening at your workplace or at her school. Like many teens, she values privacy, but appreciates knowing that you are there for her.
- Put word games, trivia challenges, or light reading materials around the home where she will see them and hopefully pick them up to read.
- Encourage good study habits, like setting goals, completing assignments on time, and asking for help from a teacher when needed. Establish a space at home for homework.
- Get your child involved in activities she enjoys such as sports, volunteering, music, or book clubs. These activities help her explore interests and keep her connected to school.
- If your older teen has trouble with comprehension, read it yourself and discuss it with her, then encourage her to try again.



# Supporting Your Child's **SUCCESS**

- Visit the library and borrow books for yourself as well as for your child. Talk to your child about what you are reading. It is key to show your child that you enjoy reading and think that learning is important.
- Scatter books, magazines, newspapers, and comics in everyday places — the car, her bedroom, or the breakfast table.
- View websites together with your child, share e-books, even listen to audiobooks. This all counts as reading — every little bit helps!
- Listen and talk to your child. She is never too young or old to learn from conversation. Talk about things that interest her and encourage her to ask questions.
- Have conversations with teens about current events and happenings in your community.
- Stay involved throughout your child's years in school. Attend parent-teacher conferences and chaperone field trips. Or arrange another time when you can meet with teachers or talk by phone. Show your child that her education is important to you.
- Remember, reading is social. Talking about what kids and adults are reading is part of academic success!

**“Talk to your child about what *you* are reading. It is key to show your child that you enjoy reading and think that learning is important.”**



Suggested

# READING

## YOUR BABY

- Goodnight Moon  
*By Margaret Wise Brown*
- My Animals  
*By Xavier Deneux*
- Pat the Bunny  
*By Dorothy Kunhardt*
- Clap Hands  
*By Helen Oxenbury*
- The Peace Book  
*By Todd Parr*

## YOUR TODDLER

- Moo Baa La La La  
*By Sandra Boynton*
- The Very Hungry Caterpillar  
*By Eric Carle*
- The Snowy Day  
*By Ezra Jack Keats*
- Is Your Mama a Llama?  
*By Deborah Guarino, illustrated by Steven Kellogg*
- Shades of People  
*By Shelley Rotner and Sheila M. Kelly, photos by Shelley Rotner*

## YOUR TODDLER/PRESCHOOLER

- Corduroy  
*By Don Freeman*
- Harold and the Purple Crayon  
*By Crockett Johnson*
- If You Give a Mouse a Cookie  
*By Laura Joffe Numeroff, illustrated by Felicia Bond*
- The Lion & the Mouse  
*By Jerry Pinkney*
- Where the Wild Things Are  
*By Maurice Sendak*

## YOUR EARLY ELEMENTARY STUDENT

- My Name is / Me  
Illamo Gabriela  
*By Monica Brown, illustrated by John Parra*
- The Girl Who Loved  
Wild Horses  
*By Paul Goble*
- The Day of Ahmed's Secret  
*By Florence Parry Heide and Judith Heide Gilliland, illustrated by Ted Lewin*
- Frog and Toad series  
*By Arnold Lobel*
- Martha Speaks  
*By Susan Meddaugh*

## YOUR UPPER ELEMENTARY STUDENT

- Where the Mountain  
Meets the Moon  
*By Grace Lin*
- Number the Stars  
*By Lois Lowry*
- Bridge to Terabithia  
*By Katherine Paterson, illustrated by Donna Diamond*
- Little House series  
*By Laura Ingalls Wilder*
- Freedom Summer  
*By Deborah Wiles, illustrated by Jerome Lagarrigue*

## YOUR YOUNG TEEN

- The Hunger Games series  
*By Suzanne Collins*
- The Ear, the Eye, and the  
Arm: A Novel  
*By Nancy Farmer*
- The Outsiders  
*By S.E. Hinton*
- Holes  
*By Louis Sachar*
- When You Reach Me  
*By Rebecca Stead*

*Encouraging Your Child to Read* was conceived by Harvard Graduate School of Education faculty members Joe Blatt, Nonie Lesaux, and Catherine Snow and written by Nonie Lesaux with help from research assistants Joan Kelley, Michelle Hastings, and Julie Russ. Spanish translation by Armida Lizarraga, with the assistance of Emma Billard, Paola Uccelli, and Andres Galindo.

To accompany *WAITING FOR "SUPERMAN,"* the producers Paramount Pictures, Participant Media, and Walden Media are conducting a nationwide social action campaign dedicated, in part, to promoting children's literacy. Working in collaboration with our literacy partners First Book®, Reach Out and Read, City Year, and Jumpstart, we seek to ensure that all parents understand the importance of reading and have access to age-appropriate books for their families. To learn more, please visit [www.waitingforsuperman.com/action](http://www.waitingforsuperman.com/action).

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**This pocket guide is distributed in partnership with Reach Out and Read, the national nonprofit, school readiness organization. Tools for Parents: For reading tips and "doctor-recommended" children's books, visit [www.reachoutandread.org/parents](http://www.reachoutandread.org/parents).**

First Book, a nonprofit organization that provides new books to children in need, addresses one of the most important factors affecting literacy — access to books. Learn more at [www.firstbook.org](http://www.firstbook.org).

City Year unites young people of all backgrounds for a year of full-time service, giving them the skills and opportunities to change the world. These diverse young leaders help turn around high need schools and get students back on track to graduation. Learn more at [www.cityyear.org](http://www.cityyear.org).

Jumpstart recruits and trains caring adults to work with pre-school children in low-income neighborhoods, helping them to develop the language and literacy skills they need to succeed in school and in life. Learn more at [www.jstart.org](http://www.jstart.org).

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