

# MINNESOTA CENTER for Reading Research

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA  
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## 10 Tips for Supporting Your Child in Reading and Writing

1. Have conversations and tell stories together

Speaking and listening are at the heart of learning to read and write. The more words children know, the more they will understand what they are reading, and will be able to write their own stories. Talk to your child all the time – in the car, at the market, on a walk, or at mealtime. The more conversation, the better! Share family stories with your child or make up stories that are funny or interesting. Encourage your child to tell stories and ask questions, too.
2. Read together

Read to your child every day. There is no better way to support learning to read than sharing books, magazines, e-books, recipes, and other texts. As children learn to read on their own, let them read to you. The more children read, the more automatic they will become. Be positive and encouraging and make sure to discuss the reading topic with your child.
3. Provide writing materials and occasions to share messages in writing

Have paper, pencils, crayons, markers or other writing tools around the house for your child to use in writing. Young children will draw their story first, and then begin to write using made-up words. It is okay if your child does not spell correctly – writing **“the best they can”** should be encouraged. Find ways to encourage writing such as by making shopping lists together, writing notes to friends and family members, or keeping track of the day’s plan.
4. Notice and discuss interesting words

Building a bigger vocabulary will be very helpful for your child’s success in reading and writing. Encourage your child to ask you about unknown words. When you are together and hear an unusual word, talk about it with your child. Share any new words you are learning, and why you think they are interesting. Have fun playing with the sounds in words such as “bumblebee,” or hearing rhyming words such as funny-bunny-honey. Help your child develop a curiosity for and a love of learning new words.
5. Find a quiet workspace for your child to complete school assignments

If your child attends school, set up a quiet place at home for completing school assignments such as reading and writing tasks. It helps if all of the children can have this work time at the same time, so it is easier for everyone to concentrate. Also, brothers and sisters can help to answer each other’s questions. Turn off the TV and try to find a hard surface, such as a table or writing board, for children to work on.



6. Communicate with teachers and tutors at school

Talk with teachers and tutors at school on a regular basis so you can keep up with your child's reading and writing progress. The teacher may give you some specific ideas for ways to help your child at home. For example, if your child is just learning about reading and writing, the teacher may ask you to practice the alphabet. If your child is already reading, the teacher may ask you to listen to your child read each night at home. Teachers and tutors will also learn a lot from listening to you. **You can share what you notice about your child's reading and writing, and what your child's interests are.** Try to attend parent conferences, but also come by school on other days to catch up with your child's progress.

7. Show your child why reading and writing are important in your daily life

How do you use reading and writing in your work and home life? How does reading and writing make your life better? Take the time to answer these questions with your child so that you build a reason to learn. Point out all the times during the day that you use reading and writing. Share times in which reading helps you laugh, accomplish jobs, find information, or learn something new. Share times in which writing helps you communicate with others, remember your ideas, stay organized, or be creative. You help your child become a better reader and writer when you build motivation.



8. Help your child get to school ready to learn

Children learn so much about reading and writing while at school, so help them to make the most of their time. Students learn best when they are rested and calm. Arrive at school on time, and avoid last-minute stressful interactions. Ensure that your children get breakfast either at home or school. Tell your children how much you want them to learn and what high expectations you have for them. Be positive and supportive!

9. Use TV and video games wisely

Set some rules for how much time and what kinds of television programs you want your child to watch. Uncontrolled TV watching and video game playing will take away from time to read or do school assignments, and may affect your child's learning. **When possible, watch TV with your child and discuss the programs together.** What questions or new ideas come up?

10. Learn new things together

There are always opportunities to learn through reading, whether it is on the computer, at the library, or at an exhibit at the fair. Read the signs and information around you, and share what you learn with your child. When you or your child has a question, show your child how to look up the answer. You can add writing by keeping track of your notes in a journal. Where do cheetahs live? How big is a blue whale? What are the instruments in an orchestra?

Reading is the gateway to new information, so choose a topic of interest and go learn about it together!

