

# Give the Gift of Reading

*By Diane Trautman*

There is more to reading than learning the alphabet and identifying words. We need to start by understanding the meaning of words and the ways in which they are used in spoken language. We have to experience the rhythm of speech. Along the way, we need to develop eye-hand coordination, visual discrimination, and cognitive skills to become proficient readers. And we need to develop and expand our vocabulary through life experience.

We can best support that learning process by reading to our young children every day, by giving our kids opportunities to participate in a variety of activities, and by engaging them in conversation regularly. The best way to encourage children to read on their own is to show them that we enjoy reading a variety of materials on a daily basis.

Parents can help young children read by pointing out words on signs, in books, and in other printed materials, then discussing their meanings. Show your child how to use tracking skills — following text on a page — by using your finger to point out the words as you read a story to them. Improve their visual skills by cutting out shapes together, playing sorting games, and creating patterns with blocks, beads or other shapes.

You can sing songs and recite nursery rhymes or poems to help your child grasp the rhythm of spoken language. Listening to books on tape while following along in the printed book is another fun way to encourage reading and vocal variety in speaking.

Reading together and talking about a story gives you an opportunity to expand your child's vocabulary, develop his reasoning skills, and improve his recall abilities. Allow your child to make predictions about the story and characters. Ask her to describe images inspired by the text, make comparisons with people and situations she knows, and tell you how she would change the story.

Working together on puzzles and mazes, and playing card and board games are fun ways to develop reasoning and recall skills. Ask your child to describe different approaches to solving a task. Discuss the events of the day and ask your child to recall the details. Spend time each day talking with, listening to, and encouraging your child to expand their horizons and you can develop a good reader.

*Diane Trautman can be reached at StudyPros In-Home Tutoring, 661-296-9206 or [studypros.com](http://studypros.com).*