Six Pre-Reading Skills
your child can start learning from birth!

Vocabulary
Knowing the
name of things.

Phonological
Awareness
Being able to hear and
play with the smaller
sounds in words.

Narrative Skills
Being able to describe
things and events and
tell stories.

Print
Motivation
Being interested in
and enjoying books.

Letter
Knowledge
Knowing letters are different
from each other, knowing
their names and sounds and
recognizing letters everywhere.

Print
Awareness
Knowing how to handle a book
and knowing how to follow
the words on a page.

According to research, there are six pre-reading
skills that children must learn in order
to learn to read.

Activities you do
to support each of
these skills will
change as your
child grows.

Why parents are so important
in helping their children get
ready to read:

- You know your children best.
- Children learn best when they are in
  a good mood, and you know their
  moods best.
- You can help your children learn reading
  skills in ways that are easiest for them.
- Children learn best by doing things—and
  they love doing things with you.

Take every chance you have to read with
your children, talk about stories, sing
songs and play word games.

Ask your public library for the names of
books to read to four- and five-year-olds.
Ask about library programs that you and
your child can enjoy together.

Every Child Ready to Read @ your library

www.pla.org/earlyliteracy.htm

Every Child
Ready to
Read @ your
library

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A PARTNERSHIP AMONG THE PUBLIC LIBRARY ASSOCIATION,
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Parent Guide to Early Literacy
for Pre-Readers:
Four- and Five-Year-Olds
WHAT CAN I DO TO HELP?

Learning words begins at birth and grows throughout a child's life. Most children start school knowing between 3,000 and 5,000 words.

Vocabulary
- Talk with your child about what is going on around you. Talk about how things work, feelings and ideas.
- When your child talks with you, add more detail to what she says.
- Speak in the language that is most comfortable for you.
- Read together every day. When you talk about the story and pictures, your child hears and learns more words.
- Learn together by reading some true books on subjects that your child likes.
- Research shows that children who have larger vocabularies are better readers.

Knowing many words helps children recognize written words and understand what they read.

Print Motivation
- Make book-sharing time a special time for closeness between you and your child.
- Let your child see you reading.
- Visit your public library often.
- Children who enjoy books will want to learn how to read.

Narrative Skills
- Listen to your child carefully when he talks.
- Ask your child to tell you about something that happened. Let him tell you about a picture he drew.
- Share books together.
- Stories help children understand that things happen in order—first, next, last.
- Read a book together that your child already knows. Switch what you do. You be the listener and let your child tell you the story.
- Ask “what” questions. Point to a picture and say, “What’s that?” or “What is happening here?”
- Ask what your child says. If your child says, “big truck” then you say, “Yes, a big red fire truck.”
- Ask open-ended questions like, “What do you think is happening in this picture?”
- Be able to tell or retell a story helps children understand what they read.

Print Awareness
- Read aloud everyday print—labels, signs, lists, menus. Print is everywhere!
- Point to some of the words as you say them, especially words that are repeated.
- Let your child hold the book and read or tell the story.
- Hold the book upside down. See if your child turns the book around.
- Being familiar with printed language helps children feel comfortable with books and understand that print is useful.

Letter Knowledge
- Write your child’s name.
- Make letters from clay or use magnetic letters.
- Point out and name letters when reading alphabet books, signs or labels.
- Show your child that the same letter can look different.
- Write words that interest your child (like “dinosaur” or “truck”) using crayons, magnetic letters or pencil and paper.
- Knowing the names and sounds of letters helps children figure out how to say written words.

Phonological Awareness
Most children who have an understanding of phonological awareness have an easier time learning to read. Help your pre-reader become aware of the smaller sounds that make up words.
- Ask whether two words rhyme: “Do ‘cat’ and ‘dog’ rhyme?” “Do ‘cat’ and ‘hat’ rhyme?”
- Say words with word chunks left out: “What word would we have if you took the ‘hot’ away from ‘hotdog’?”
- Put two word chunks together to make a word: “What word would we have if we put ‘cow’ and ‘boy’ together?”
- Say words with sounds left out: “What word would we have if we took the ‘buh’ sound away from ‘bat’?”
- Say rhymes and make up your own silly, nonsense rhymes together.
- Sing songs. Songs have different notes for each syllable in a word.
- Read some poetry together. Make up short poems together. Say the words that rhyme.
- Say rhymes and sing songs in the language most comfortable for you.

Most children who have difficulty reading have trouble with phonological awareness.