

HOW CAN I HELP MY CHILD IN KINDERGARTEN?

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

Read Everyday

Perhaps the single most important thing you can do at this stage to foster your child's early reading and writing skills is to read to him every single day. A recent OECD study comparing the role of parents in education in several countries found that the factor that best predicts better reading performance when a child is 15 is whether he was read to during his early years. Read as often as you can to your child, even if just for 20 minutes a day, and do your best to make reading time a fun experience that both of you enjoy.

Develop Your Child's Curiosity for Books

Before you actually start to read a new book to your child, read just the title and look at the picture on the cover or first page. Ask him, "What do you think this book will be about?" or "Tell me what you know about...?" These questions will help your child develop curiosity about books.

Read Non-Fiction Books

Make sure to include non-fiction books in the titles you choose. Kindergarteners are fascinated by the world around them and learn a lot about how it works from non-fiction books. They especially love books about animals (including dinosaurs, of course!), outer space, and trucks and machines.

Develop Good Reading Habits

Reading skills will always be essential to your child's academic success, so do everything you can to make sure that he develops good reading habits. It's especially important that he sees you and other adults enjoying reading. This will help him view reading in a positive light.

Sing Songs to Your Child

Reading to your child isn't the only way to insure that he becomes a strong reader as he gets older. Singing songs with him and familiarizing him with a range of lyrics will also help develop language skills.

Play Word Games

Play simple word games like "I Spy With My Little Eye," seeking out things that begin with a certain letter. In the car, play games with road signs or license plates, such as having your kindergartener spot words or plates that begin with a specific letter.

Act Out a Storyline

Have your child "act out" the storylines of a book you're reading. This helps your child learn new vocabulary words and better understand plot and character development.

Play Vocabulary Word Games

Make a game out of broadening your child's vocabulary. Choose five unfamiliar new words for your child to learn each week and see how often everyone in the family can use those words in everyday conversation. This will help improve your kindergartener's vocabulary, reading comprehension, and speaking skills.

Encourage Writing and Drawing

As a parent, you can do so much to help your kindergartener feel like a writer. Encourage drawing, scribbling, and writing. Successful and fluent writers are confident in their abilities, and writing every day, in whatever form, will help your child gain that confidence.

Explore Different Uses for Writing

Make sure that your child sees how you use writing in different ways for different tasks, purposes, and audiences. Provide a running commentary as you write, explaining what you're writing, to whom, and why. Explain why you're making sure to use more formal language and capital letters in a thank you note to your mother, compared to the conversational tone of a note to your spouse about groceries.

Incorporate Basic Math Concepts

Try to incorporate basic math concepts into everyday activities. Have your child count objects regularly and pose easy counting challenges, such as counting the number of steps on a flight of stairs or the number of red cars you see while driving. Take opportunities to count by twos or fives or tens, for example, if you've bought many of the same item at the grocery store or need to count a pile of coins.

Practice Shape Recognition

Practice recognition of different shapes. Have your child spot things that are triangular, like pieces of pizza or the roof of a house, or rectangular, like paper money. As you talk about different shapes, have him describe why a shape he spots is a triangle (three sides) or a square (four equal sides) or a rectangle (two opposite equal sides and two other opposite equal sides of longer length).

Solve Jigsaw Puzzles

Doing puzzles is a great way to develop important visual discrimination skills or the ability to recognize differences and similarities in shape, form, pattern, size, position, and color.

Apply Math in Everyday Life

It's especially memorable to children when they can use their new math concepts in their everyday life. Have your child arrange his favorite stuffed animals in a circle for a party and give two or three crackers to each toy. Have him add up the total number of crackers distributed. Ask him to predict how many more crackers he would need if one of his toy action figures joined the party. Then ask him to predict the total number of crackers needed with yet another guest. This gives him an opportunity to "add up" in his head and then see if he is correct when he actually adds the next figure and counts up the new total. The game can be played in reverse when one of the figures leaves the party, taking his crackers with him.

Play More or Less

Think of a number for your child to guess. After each guess, respond with the words "higher" or "lower." At different times use the words "more" or "less," so he learns different arithmetic vocabulary. This game helps him correlate number words and counting sequence with actual amounts or sizes.

Practice Sequencing

Practice sequencing with your child to develop his ability to recognize and store math procedures and number sequences. Make a peanut butter and jelly sandwich or build a snowman together, and then ask him to describe in order the actions that took place. He can also describe the sequence of events that took place in the day, in a movie he saw, or in a story he read.

Develop an Understanding of Units of Time

Use a timer for activities like watching TV or using the computer, so that your child becomes familiar with the concept of time and how long different units of time last. If your child doesn't want to leave the playground, tell him he can stay for 5 more minutes. He'll start to develop an understanding of time and how long different units of time last if you do this regularly.

Learn to Count Money

Give your child a piggy bank and help fill it with spare change. Every month, empty it together and have your child sort the coins by denomination. Have him match the coins to the denominations indicated on coin wrappers, which can be obtained from some banks or purchased inexpensively. This will help your kindergartner with counting, value recognition, and sorting, as well as hand-eye coordination.

Play Music

Music is a great way for your child to engage with concepts related to math. Practicing an instrument means learning about tempo, measure, and meter – all of which involve math.

Play Family Games with Math

Plenty of family games incorporate math. Tic Tac Toe, Connect Four, and Dominoes are just some of the many games that help build math skills.