

Parenting Counts

Reading, Learning, Living

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community education kindness

The Happy Childhood

From *How to Get Your Child to Love Reading* by Esme' Raji Codell

The single most important activity for building the knowledge required for eventual success in reading is reading aloud to children.

why read today

-National Academy of Education, *Becoming a Nation of Readers*.

Love, like literacy, is a great source of strength. And, like literacy, it is a gift we can give our children that never goes away.

It's all but inevitable that sooner or later our children will face the world's hardships. Amid such challenges it can mean so much to have happy memories and to know that someone has loved them.

Reading with your children is one wonderful way to ensure that they will have those happy memories. But it is not the *only* way. In the words of Garrison Keillor, "Nothing you do for your children is ever wasted." All quality time spent with your children will foster in them the confidence to explore their world and will instill in them the security to concentrate well.

Reading with them – because it is a way of spending quality time together – will help your children be receptive to all learning, including but not limited to reading. It will help them face life's challenges. The following are some ways that you can help your child have a happy childhood.

The Happy Childhood Checklist

- ✓ Have your child dictate stories to you and write them down for them.
- ✓ Visit a museum.
- ✓ Ask your child about her day at the end of it.
- ✓ Tell stories about grandparents and the child's family history.
- ✓ Help your child notice the alphabet and numbers in everyday situations.
- ✓ Help your child write and mail letters to people.
- ✓ Read and discuss the newspaper in front of your child.
- ✓ Switch off the television during prime-time commercials.
- ✓ Take your child to the supermarket with you.
- ✓ Make music with your child.
- ✓ Bring your child on a trip.
- ✓ Bring your child to work with you one day.
- ✓ Celebrate lost teeth.
- ✓ Get your child his own library card...and use it.
- ✓ Take walks or bike rides together.
- ✓ Give your child free time in which to play.

- ✓ Give thanks at mealtimes or bedtime.
- ✓ Close a book before the last page and ask your child what she thinks will happen.
- ✓ Cook with your child.
- ✓ Say you're sorry when you make a mistake.
- ✓ Say yes sometimes when your child expects you to say no.
- ✓ Stay home from work when your child is sick.
- ✓ Listen to knock-knock jokes.
- ✓ Leave a night-light on.
- ✓ Look up an answer to a question with your child.
- ✓ Take pictures and put them in an album.
- ✓ Dance with your child standing on your feet.
- ✓ Stand at the bottom of the playground slide and applaud enthusiastically.
- ✓ Help your child get acquainted with nursery rhymes from an early age.
- ✓ Tell your child that you're proud of him and that you love him.
- ✓ Tell your child you love him even when you're not proud.
- ✓ Read aloud to your child.

funny bones



- A. Knock Knock
- B. Who's there?
- A. Olive
- B. Olive who?
- A. Olive you!



Do you qualify for help? Check out this website to see!

Bridge to Benefits

Bridge to Benefits is a multi-state project by Children’s Defense Fund Minnesota to improve the well-being of families and individuals by linking them to help in the form of public work support programs and tax credits.

Bridge to Benefits uses an online screening tool designed to help families and individuals understand if they are eligible for eight public work support programs and two income tax credits to help people meet their basic needs. In Minnesota, thousands of eligible families are not participating in these programs or claiming the tax credits that could provide increased economic stability for their families.

To see if you or someone else may be eligible for help, visit <http://mn.bridgetobenefits.org> to use the Eligibility Screening Tool. You will be asked a few simple questions but you will NOT be asked to give information that identifies you. It’s easy, confidential and free!

kids in the kitchen

Make Nutrition Fun (And Colorful!)

By Parenting - www.parenting.com

To get kids to eat more fruits and vegetables, try to make meals with a different color theme every day of the week, using produce from the designated shade. For example:

Purple Monday

Fruit: Toss a handful of blueberries into vanilla yogurt.

Veggie: Layer eggplant slices into lasagna.

White Tuesday

Fruit: Wrap peeled pear slices in ham or turkey slices.

Veggie: Sauté chopped cauliflower, then fold into macaroni and cheese.

Red Wednesday

Fruit: Add unpeeled apple slices to a tasty peanut butter sandwich.

Veggie: Spear cherry tomatoes on toothpicks with cubes of cheese.

Orange/Yellow Thursday

Fruit: Top cottage cheese with fresh apricot slices.

Veggie: Sweeten up cooked carrots with butter and brown sugar.

Green Friday

Fruit: Top an English muffin with low-fat cream cheese and kiwi slices.

Veggie: Toss broccoli florets or spinach into a delicious cheese quesadilla.

activity block

Feeling cooped up in the house this winter? Try these activities for some indoor fun.

Carpet Raceway Activity – Make a raceway or train track on a carpet by laying down books of equal thickness side by side to make a smooth lane, or use pieces of plywood or two-by-fours. (Your raceway can be any length and can be straight or have turns.) This will transform the carpet into a smooth surface for racing toys with wheels.

Homemade Box Train – Help toddlers learn about their body strength. *Necessary Materials:* 2 medium-sized brown packing boxes (about 18 inches or less across) and brightly colored thick yarn.

- 1. Cut the flaps off 2 good-sized boxes, and be sure to remove any staples that may be sticking out.
- 2. Pass a cord of sturdy yarn, about 12 to 15 inches long, through 2 holes at the end of one box.
- 3. Link the second box to it using another piece of yarn. Your toddler will love to pull this mini-train around the house.

Extra Fun

- Challenge your toddler to throw things into the train.
- Challenge your toddler to push the train from behind instead of pulling it.
- Put something heavy into the train so your toddler can experience resistance. Remove the items to show the difference in strength required.

<http://fun.familyeducation.com>