

GROWING YOUNG BRAINS: Building a Foundation for Reading



6-12
MONTHS



Mirror Mirror

Does your child wiggle when you change their diaper? Do you have an unbreakable mirror or something safe and reflective where they can see themselves? Give them this to hold and talk about what they're looking at: "I see you looking at your nose!"

Brainy Background™

Babies learn with their senses. When they see their face and you talk about their nose and other body parts, they're making connections between words and objects, which lays the foundation for reading in the future.



3-5
YEARS



Rhyme Time

Pick a word and take turns saying words that rhyme with it. Keep going until you run out of words that rhyme. Then let your child pick a word. See if you can come up with silly ones to keep it fun like "slinky, pinkie, stinky."

Brainy Background™

Rhyming games, like this one, help your child focus on word sounds. This will help with reading and writing later on.

Visit WeAreBrainBuilders.org for more brain-building resources.



3-5
YEARS



Sign Readers

Even if there isn't time today for books, we're surrounded by words that are ready for reading. Point to a word you see on a sign (like a stop sign on the street) and have your child guess what the word means. If they can't guess, give them some helpful clues.

Brainy Background™

Back and forth conversations about signs help your child learn about words and what they mean.



4-5
YEARS



Storytelling Bag

Put items in a bag, like a pen, a spoon, and a cup. Start a story, "Once there was a girl." Ask your child to pick an item from the bag and use it in the story. With the cup, they might say, "The girl was thirsty so she drank some water." Take turns picking from the bag and adding to the story.

Brainy Background™

Having fun with stories builds your child's storytelling skills. Each time they pull an item from the bag, they must use their memory to remember what has already happened in the story and think flexibly to make connections between that item and how to use it to add to the story.

READING TIPS

The brain grows the fastest in the first five years of life!

Start building the foundation for reading now through play, conversations, books, and more.

- 1 Tell a fun story about something from your childhood.
- 2 “Picture Read” the story for infants and toddlers.
- 3 Identify objects in the book or play ‘I Spy’ with objects in the illustrations.
- 4 Ask open-ended questions about the story. “What do you think this story is going to be about?” “What do you think will happen next?” “How do you think he is feeling?”
- 5 Sing a song or finger-play about the story.



- 6 Tell children stories about what you’re doing during an everyday moment — for example, while gardening, repairing a car, preparing a meal, etc.
- 7 Encourage children to create their own story. You can write the words on paper as they tell their story or even record their voice.
- 8 Ask children to draw a picture, then say, “Tell me about your picture.”
- 9 Turn children’s artwork into stories. As a child tells you about their picture, write down the words they share.
- 10 Tell a story with puppets, stuffed animals, miniature dolls, superhero figurines, or socks as your puppets.



- 11 Hunt in the book for letters in ABC order.
- 12 Take turns with children to verbally re-tell the story from memory.
- 13 Try out different voices for the characters in the book; ask which was best.
- 14 Ask a parent, grandparent, aunt, caregiver or other loved one to record a video of themselves reading a book or telling a story.
- 15 Create a reading corner. Include items that make the area comfortable and encourage reading.

