

Literacy How Reading Wheel for Parents



Speaking and Listening

Babies are born with their brains “hardwired” to learn language. Listening and speaking develop naturally, but reading and writing must be learned. Parents can help their children develop language skills by talking with them about everyday events, such as a trip to the grocery store. Tell your child stories and share books. Parents shouldn’t be afraid to use big words. That is how children learn new ideas and new vocabulary words.

Sounds in Words

Words are made up of individual sounds. Every would-be reader must be able to hear these sounds, pronounce each one individually, then put them back together again. (For example, /h/ /a/ /t/ are the sounds in hat.) Parents can help their children tune into individual sounds by asking them what sound they hear at the beginning, end, or middle of a word.

Sounding Out Words

Students begin to read written words when they can match letters (written symbols) to the sounds they make. Parents can help their children by pointing out patterns in words (such as rhyming words, cat, fat, hat, sat). When they try to read a new word, encourage them to “sound it out” instead of looking at the picture for help.

Knowledge of the World

By having different kinds of experiences, children gain facts, information, and skills that help them understand the world around them. This, in turn, helps them make sense of what they are reading. Parents can help their children learn about the world by engaging them in everyday experiences—like cooking dinner—and taking them places where they will see, hear, taste, touch, smell, and think about new things. Have fun together at a festival, parade, picnic, farmer’s market, concert, museum, zoo, ball game, or the beach. Sign up for a library card. Experience the world by sharing all kinds of books with your child.

What Words Mean

In order for a child to understand what s/he is reading, s/he must understand what the words mean. Children who have a large vocabulary—recognizing words and knowing their meaning/s—will become better readers and writers. Parents can help their children learn new vocabulary by pointing out interesting and unfamiliar words, helping them understand their meaning/s, and encouraging them to use them. Ask your child to write the word and draw a picture of it. Hang up each word on the refrigerator or wall, clip them to ribbon, or collect words in a jar. Each day ask your child to use one of the new words in a sentence. Or have them make up a story using several of the words.

Making Meaning

The ability to make meaning—that is, understand what is being read—is the goal of reading. Parents can help their children by checking their understanding of the text they are reading. Parents can ask questions about information in the story—“Who?,” “What?,” “Where?,” and “When?,”—as well as questions that children need to think about—“How?,” “Why?”. Or have your child tell you the story in his or her own words.