

## From the Health Clinic



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## Creating a Reader-Friendly Home

A home filled with reading material is a good way to help children become enthusiastic readers. What kind of books should you have? Ask your children about their interests. If they are too young to have a preference, your local librarian can offer suggestions about age-appropriate books.

Here are some other tips:

**Keep a varied selection.** Collect board books or books with mirrors and different textures for babies. Preschoolers enjoy alphabet books, rhyming books, and picture books. Elementary-age kids will enjoy variety: fiction, nonfiction, and poetry, plus dictionaries and other reference books.

Children can understand stories they might not be able to read on their own. If a more challenging book interests your child, make it something to read together. Younger children can look at illustrations in books and ask questions as they follow along.

And do not limit reading material to books. Kids might also enjoy:

- magazines (for children)
- audio books
- postcards, e-mails, and text messages from relatives
- photo albums or scrapbooks
- newspapers
- comic books
- the Internet
- beginning reading and alphabet games on a computer
- magnetized alphabet letters
- e-readers or e-books

**Keep reading material handy.** Keep sturdy books with other toys for easy exploration. Books near the changing table and high chair can be helpful distractions for younger children at appropriate moments. Plastic books can even go in the bathtub. Keep books next to comfy chairs and sofas where you cuddle up so you can read after feedings and before naps.

**Create a special reading place.** As children grow, keep age-appropriate books and magazines on shelves they can reach in their favorite hangouts around the house. Make these shelves appealing and keep them organized. Place some of the books with the covers facing out so they're easy to spot. Put a basket full of books and magazines next to their favorite places to sit. Create a cozy reading corner, and encourage children to use it by setting up "reading corner time" each day.

**Keep it appealing.** Make sure reading areas have good lighting. Change the materials often - add seasonal books, rotate different magazines, and include books that relate to what children are interested in or studying in school. Decorate the corner with your child's artwork or writing. Place a CD or tape player nearby for audio books.

**Encourage children to create the reading.** Set up a writing and art center and encourage kids to make books, posters, or collages that they decorate with their

own pictures and writing. Children love to read things they have written themselves or to share their creations with family and friends.

## **Think About Atmosphere**

Other ways to encourage children to read:

- Give your child a special, cozy space and quiet time every day to read or write.
- Limit time children spend in front of a screen (including TV, computer, and video games) to help ensure that they have time for reading.
- Keep reading activities family-centered, and take an active role in guiding your child in reading activities and media. Even with today's high use of technology, parents can decide how much print and how much media to allow into story time. Reading e-books doesn't have to mean sacrificing lap-time. Make sure to snuggle up with a story often, in whatever format.
- Read together. Offer to read a book aloud or ask your child to read to you from a favorite magazine. Make a habit of sitting together while you each read your own books, sharing quiet time together.



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