Take a fresh approach to reading routines in the new year

January is a great time to take inventory of your reading routines. Which routines are working for your child? What needs to be changed?

To refresh your reading routines:

• **Stockpile story starters.** Tear the fronts off leftover holiday cards and put them in a box. Have your child pick one during story time. Together, invent a tale based on the illustration.

• **Create a reading clubhouse.** Throw a blanket over the kitchen table or make a cave in your child’s closet. Just find a snuggly spot to read together during your daily reading time.

• **Look for new materials.** Expand your child’s horizons by moving beyond books. Some days, spend story time browsing through magazines or newspapers.


Provide your child with a variety of reading opportunities

Expose your child to a large range of reading materials. The more types of writing your child reads, the more chances he has to enjoy reading!

With your child, read books and other materials that:

• **Represent different categories,** including fantasy, poetry and nonfiction.

• **Are written in many styles** by a wide range of authors.

• **Cover interesting topics,** from butterflies to baseball.


Help your child choose the right books

Encourage your child to read exciting books that are just right for her. Let your child select the books that she wants to read. When she likes the books that you read together, she’ll want to read more and more.

To help your child choose books, explain that:

• **There is a purpose for reading.** Whether for fun or to learn something, knowing why she is reading will help her narrow down the type of book she should be looking for.

• **It’s OK to stop reading a book.** If your child isn’t interested in the book she selected, it doesn’t make sense to keep reading it! To keep your child’s interest in books, don’t force yourselves to finish a book just because you started it.

• **She can use her favorites for inspiration.** If your child loves a certain book, look for similar ones, such as others by that author or about the same topic.

SOURCE: “Tip: Help a Child Choose a Book,” ReadWriteThink, niswc.com/choosebook.

Singing helps your child’s language development

When you sing songs with your child, you’re helping her develop language skills—and having fun! Singing will help your child:

• **Remember important information through song lyrics.**

• **Enjoy a creative activity.**

• **Exercise the muscles in her mouth, which are important for speaking.**


Send your child on a letter-sound search around your home

Write a few letters on index cards or pieces of paper (each card should have just one letter written on it). Ask your child to choose one card.

Together, see how many objects you can find around your home that begin with that letter. When you’ve found all that you can find, try another letter!
Play listening games with your child

Listening is an important part of literacy. But telling your child to “listen well” isn’t enough to boost this key skill. Help him practice listening in fun ways. Have your child:

- **Help out at home.** Choose tasks that interest your child. Then give specific directions. If he likes watering plants, say, “Fill the watering can. Touch the plant’s soil. If it feels dry, water the plant.” If he likes setting the table, say, “Place three bowls and three spoons on the table.”

- **Fill in story details.** Read or tell your child a detailed story several times. Make it one he loves. Then pretend you can’t remember part of it. Can he complete it for you? You may be surprised!

- **Play Simon Says.** Children love listening to “Simon’s” instructions (Simon says, “Raise your right hand!”) and doing what he says. When Simon doesn’t give his permission (“Raise your left hand”)—kids can ignore the instruction.


Remind your child about these library tips

The public library is a great resource for your child. With an abundance of reading materials to enjoy, as well as fun activities to participate in, the library provides plenty of opportunities to build your child’s love of reading.

Remind your child about these important rules so that she—and the library’s other patrons—will be able to enjoy the library:

- **Treat library books with care and respect.** Library books are everyone’s property. It is important to take care of them so that everyone can enjoy them.

- **Return books on time.** Libraries often charge for overdue books. Keep your books in a special place so your family gets them back on time.

- **Use quiet voices.** Everyone in the community may use the library. Speak softly so that others won’t be disturbed.

Books to delight your early reader

- **Flabbersmashed About You** by Rachel Vail (Feiwel & Friends). When Katie’s best friend chooses to line up with someone else, Katie is more than angry—she’s flabbersmashed. That is, until she finds someone new to play with.

- **The Jellybeans and the Big Dance** by Laura Numeroff and Nate Evans (Abrams Books for Young Readers). Emily can’t wait for her first dance class. When she begins, she finds out special things about her new classmates.

- **What Pet Should I Get?** by Dr. Seuss (Random House Books for Young Readers). A brother and sister can pick any pet they want in a pet store. With so many options, how will they ever make up their minds?

Q: My preschooler already takes good care of her books. How else can I make her a responsible reader?

A: Let her be in charge of story time. Have your preschooler choose which books to read and where to sit while sharing stories. It may help her feel more grown-up to take the lead on something as important as story time!

Do you have a question about reading? Email readingadvisor@parent-institute.com.

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