

Storytime Messages

From Every Child Ready to Read[®], 2nd Edition

Adapted by Mary Fellows, Upper Hudson Library System

To provide the best early literacy experience for children, we need to educate the parents and caregivers about how to foster learning at home. The educational and motivational messages below are meant to be comfortably incorporated, some in each session, by storytime presenters.

Presenters should deliver five or six of these messages at each storytime. Use messages from various categories, and choose a few new ones each session. A combination of repeating key messages and introducing new concepts will provide adults the most useful learning experience.

While the parent education is essential, the main focus of storytime is the children. Messages should be integrated smoothly into the storytime framework so that 90% of the storytime conversation is with the children. The messages following are categorized to help presenters choose appropriate ones to use before or after specific activities such as singing and reading.

Text in brackets is an introductory sentence that is repeated in other messages. If delivering two messages with the same introductory sentence, the presenter should restate the sentence in another way the second time.

To assist in remembering to deliver the specific messages, presenters may want to print them on cards and keep them handy.

Messages About Talking (use anytime)

[Talking with your child is really important.] Conversations are one of the best ways to help your child learn new information and new words. Make sure your child has lots of opportunities not just to listen to you talk, but to talk with you. Respond to what your child says, and follow his or her lead.

[Talking with your child is really important.] One way to help children learn more from a conversation is to repeat a child's request or comment and paraphrase it. If he says, "I want blue truck," you can say: You want to play with your blue truck?

[Talking with your child is really important.] One way to help children learn more from a conversation is to expand on your child's comments and stretch out the conversation with additional explanations. If she states that the sweater is red, you can say, "Yes, it's red, and it's made of wool. Feel how soft! What animal do you think gives us wool?"

[Talking with your child is really important in getting him ready to read.] Use new words when you talk. Good readers have a large vocabulary. Knowing lots of words helps children better understand what they read.

[Talking with your child is really important.] Take turns. Children are just beginning to learn to have a conversation. It is important for parents to ask questions and listen to what children say in response.

[Talking with your child is really important.] Help your child make connections. Recalling past events and connect them to current and future activities. For example, “Yesterday Aunt Mary came to visit. She brought you this book, remember? She will come back to see you on Sunday.” This helps children develop an understanding that language can represent events that are not happening now.

[Talking with your child is really important.] Talking, telling stories, and stretching conversations are ways children learn new information, new vocabulary, and other early literacy skills.

[Talking with your child is really important.] Labeling games are just right for young children and a wonderful way to learn words. Babies love playing, “Where is your nose? Where are your toes?”

[Talking with your child is really important.] Children love to label things, and labeling is a wonderful way to learn new words. As you go through your day, label objects and events in your child’s world. For example, “Look, Nina is on the wavy slide. What do we have at home that’s wavy?” Label feelings as well as things. “How did you feel when you went down the slide?”

[Talking with your child is really important.] Children’s language and vocabulary grow through day-to-day interactions and experiences. Talking with the important people in their lives is one of the best ways for children to learn new words.

[Talking with your child is really important.] To help your child practice listening skills and learn new words, talk about what you’re doing as you go through your day. Ask your child questions, listen to the answers, and then ask another question based on what your child said.

[Talking with your child is really important.] As a way to help your child expand vocabulary, use new words and use different words to express the same idea. For example, you might say, “Remember when we went to the park yesterday? We’re going to make the identical trip today. We’ll do all the same things and repeat all the fun we had.”

[Talking with your child is really important.] One way children learn vocabulary is from listening to stories. They listen to understand what is being said, which helps them learn new words and their meaning.

[Stories immerse children in language and help them get ready to read.] Stories aren’t found just in books. You can tell stories about your day, your memories from growing up, or something about your child’s life.

[Stories immerse children in language and help them get ready to read.] You can use wordless picture books and make up a story together with your child. With wordless books, you can develop imagination along with language and vocabulary skills.

[Talking with your child is really important.] Speak to your child often during the day and try to use many different words to express your ideas. Children love to imitate, and they will try to imitate your speech. This helps them learn new words and get ready to read.

Messages About Singing (use before/after a song)

Singing is a great way to help children learn new words and information. Songs are a natural way to learn about language.

[Singing really improves language skills.] Songs help children develop listening skills and pay attention to the rhythms and rhymes of spoken language.

[Singing really improves language skills.] Most songs have a different note for each syllable. This helps children break down words so they hear individual sounds.

[Singing really improves language skills.] Singing slows down language so children can hear different parts of words and notice how they are alike and different.

[Singing really improves language skills.] Clapping along to rhythms helps children hear the syllables in words, and it improves motor skills.

Singing introduces children to new vocabulary. As your child hears new words, make sure you explain what they mean. Use the new words later to help your children remember their meaning.

Singing develops listening skills, and helps children remember things for a longer time.

Here are some singing ideas to use at home, in the car, or anywhere. Sing songs with rhyming words, silly words, and long stretched out words. Sing songs fast, slow, and over and over.

Reading (use before/after reading a book)

No matter what your child's age, reading together with your child—or shared reading—is the single most important activity that you can do to help your child get ready to read.

[Reading together helps your child get ready to read.] Reading books introduces children to “rarer” words that they may not hear in everyday conversation. Knowing more words helps children become better readers.

[Reading together helps your child get ready to read.] Shared reading develops a love of reading and an appreciation of books. Children who enjoy being read to are more likely to want to learn to read themselves.

Reading together motivates children to want to learn to read. A child's interest in reading is an important predictor of later reading achievement.

[Reading together helps your child get ready to read.] Reading develops vocabulary and comprehension.

[Reading together helps your child get ready to read.] Reading together nurtures a love for reading.

Reading together and talking about what you read increases children's vocabulary and background knowledge.

Reading together and talking about what you read helps children learn how books work and how written language looks.

Reading together and talking about what you read gives children an understanding of how stories are organized—that they have a beginning, middle, and end.

Reading together and talking about what you read encourages imaginative thinking.

Here's a tip: follow the Rule of Three. Read a book 3 times to your child to best help him learn new vocabulary. Repetition helps children remember what new words mean.

Books are a great way to spend time talking and learning new words. As you read a story, stop and consider interesting words—have a conversation about them. Let your child have the opportunity to ask questions and make comments. It is the interaction with you that makes reading so special and important.

Children learn many more new words from books than they do from everyday conversation. Hearing these less common words is very important to developing a large vocabulary.

As you talk and explain what a new word means, you help your child increase vocabulary and general background knowledge. This will help your child understand more when he or she begins to read.

Predictable books like this one increase children's vocabulary by using repetitive language patterns and phrases, which engage children in "reading" before they actually learn to read.

Predictable books like this one encourage reading together as children will repeat the easily learned patterns with you as you read. When you come to a predictable line, use your voice and hand motions to encourage your child to read along with you.

Information (nonfiction) books also are a great way to learn new words, as well as new information. Information books often have more complex vocabulary than other books. This helps children become more word conscious and interested in learning even more words.

Writing (use anytime)

[Writing is another good activity that helps your child get ready to read.] Reading and writing go together. Both are ways to represent spoken words and to communicate information or tell stories.

[Writing is another good activity that helps your child get ready to read.] Children become aware that printed letters stand for spoken words as they see print used in their daily lives. They develop a knowledge of the purpose and meaning of reading through writing.

[Writing is another good activity that helps your child get ready to read.] As children scribble and draw, they practice eye-hand coordination and exercise the muscles in their fingers and hands. This helps develop the fine motor control they need to hold a pencil or crayon and to write letters and words.

[Writing is another good activity that helps your child get ready to read.] Writing words helps increase vocabulary.

[Writing is another good activity that helps your child get ready to read.] Children become aware that printed letters stand for spoken words as they see print used in their daily lives. They see parents and others read newspapers, food labels, road signs, and mail. They watch caregivers write lists, jot down reminders, or make notes on a calendar.

[Writing is another good activity that helps your child get ready to read.] One of the first words children write is their name. This usually begins as scribbling. As children learn letter names and improve their motor skills, they begin to form the letters of their names.

[Writing is another good activity that helps your child get ready to read.] As children scribble and draw, they practice eye-hand coordination and exercise the muscles in their fingers and hands. This helps develop the fine motor control they need to write letters and words.

[Writing is another good activity that helps your child get ready to read.] Here are some writing ideas to use at home. Make a book of your child's favorite words. Or make a word jar. Write new words on slips of paper and collect them in a jar. Ask your child if some of the words "belong together" and group them. For example, group the names of animals, people, places, feelings, etc.

[Writing is another good activity that helps your child get ready to read.] Here is a writing idea to use at home. Write captions for pictures or drawings. Ask your child what he or she wants the caption to say. Talk about how the caption relates to the drawing.

Playing (use anytime)

Children learn about language through different kinds of play.

[Play is really important.] Play is one of the best ways for children to learn language and literacy skills.

[Play is really important.] One thing it does is to help children think symbolically. For example, a stick becomes a magic wand, or a playmate becomes a wild animal. Through play, children realize that one thing can stand for another. This also helps children understand that written words stand for real objects and experiences.

[Play is really important.] Pretend play helps children think symbolically and develop oral language skills. As children play store or pretend to be an animal, they talk about what they're doing. They practice putting thoughts into words.

[Play is really important.] Dramatic play helps develop narrative skills as children make up a story about what they're doing. This helps them understand that stories happen in an order: first, next, last.

[Play is a great way for children to learn language and literacy skills.] Play helps children think symbolically: a ruler becomes a magic wand, today becomes a time when dinosaurs were alive, a playmate becomes an astronaut exploring space. Through play, children realize that one thing can stand for another. This also helps children understand that written words stand for real objects and experiences.

[Play is a great way for children to learn language and literacy skills.] Pretend play helps children think symbolically and develop oral language skills. As children play store or pretend to be an animal, they talk about what they are doing. They practice putting thoughts into words.

[Play is a great way for children to learn language and literacy skills.] Dramatic play helps develop narrative skills as children make up a story about what they are doing. This helps them understand that stories happen in an order: first, next, last.

[Play is a great way for children to learn important skills.] Make-believe gives children a chance to act out real-life situations, work through worries and fears, and use their imagination to solve problems.

[Play is a great way for children to learn important skills.] Play helps children feel a sense of accomplishment and self-confidence. This motivates them to try new experiences and not to give up when something seems difficult.

Playing word games is another way to become word conscious and increase vocabulary. "I Spy" is a favorite with kids. Let's play it now.

Library messages (use anytime)

The library has many materials and ideas you can use to talk, sing, read, write, and play with your child.

It does not matter if your child is four days old or four years old, we have books, music, programs, and services to help your child learn language and pre-reading skills.

Your library helps children get ready to read.

The library has books for you to take home and read together.

The library has music to borrow.

The library has places where you can write.

The library has places to play and learn.

The library has programs for all ages.

The library has programs for parents and caregivers so you can learn more about helping your children get ready to read.

General Messages (use anytime)

Whether your child is four days old or four years old, it is not too early or too late to help him or her develop important literacy and pre-reading skills.

Developing early literacy skills now will make it easier for your child to learn to read when he or she starts school.

One of the most important skills is vocabulary or knowing what words mean. You can help your children increase their listening and speaking vocabulary.

A listening vocabulary includes the words children understand when you speak to them. A speaking vocabulary includes the words children use when they talk. A child's listening vocabulary is usually much larger than his or her speaking vocabulary.

Knowing the meaning of many spoken words will help your children understand what written words mean once they start reading.

Children's reading success in kindergarten and beyond begins with positive language and literacy experiences from the time they are infants.

If children develop pre-reading skills before they start kindergarten, they can focus on learning to read once they begin school.

Children who start kindergarten ready to learn to read have greater success throughout their school years. They are more likely to read at or above grade level by the end of 2nd grade. Children who read at or above grade level by the end of 4th grade are much more likely to graduate from high school and be successful readers and learners throughout their lives.

You have been your child's teacher from the day he or she was born. You know more about your child than anyone else. You are in the best position to help your child get ready to read.

You are your child's first teacher.

You know your child best.

Children learn best by doing, and they love doing things with you.

Young children have short attention spans. You can do literacy activities like reading, and writing for short bits of time throughout the day.

You can help your children learn in ways and at times that are best for them.

Parents are tremendous role models—if your children see that you think reading is important and enjoy it, they will follow your lead.

Children need to know the meaning of words to understand what they read.

A large and rich vocabulary is strongly related to a child's reading ability. The more spoken words a child knows, the more printed words he or she will be able to recognize and read.

A large listening and spoken vocabulary makes it easier for a child to connect a written word to its meaning.

The early years are a critical time to develop children's vocabulary. To be ready to learn to read, most children need about 15,000 words in their listening vocabulary. That means they need to understand the meaning of 15,000 words when they hear them. The best way to help children develop a large vocabulary is to talk and read with them.

Five simple practices help children learn new vocabulary and get ready to read: talking, singing, reading, writing, playing.

You can help your child learn new vocabulary and other important early literacy skills with five practices that can easily be incorporated into your everyday activities: talking, singing, reading, writing, playing.

There are five great ways to help children get ready to read: talking, singing, reading, writing, playing. They can be done at home, at the doctor's office, in the car, or anywhere you and your child spend time together.

Getting ready to read involves many skills. Some children learn these skills earlier and more quickly than other children, just like children learn to walk and talk at different ages. With talking, singing, reading, writing, playing, you can have fun with activities that are appropriate for their age and interests.

If English is not your first language, speak to your child in the language you know best. This allows you to explain things to your child more fluently. Your child will be able to translate what he or she knows later, rather than having to learn both the concept and the English word at the same time.

You can help your child learn language and other early literacy skills with simple activities. These are easy to make part of your everyday routine and fun for both you and your child.

Children's reading success in kindergarten and beyond begins with positive language and literacy experiences from the time they are infants.

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Between two and four years old, most children are ready to learn about the letters of the alphabet, an essential pre-reading skill. One of the best ways to help your child learn the alphabet is to make it fun!

To help your child learn the alphabet, talk about letter names and sounds as you go through everyday activities. Find print in the world around you – for example, signs. Ask your child questions like, Can you find an “M”? Can you find two “O”s? Can you find the letter at the beginning of your name?

Children love to sing the alphabet song. One of the easiest ways to help them learn the alphabet is to sing the song with them and to sing it often. Sometimes children will sing the song as if “elemeno” is one word. Help children hear the individual letters by slowing down the song. You can point to the letters as you sing.

Alphabet books offer many interesting opportunities to learn letter names and sounds.

To help your child learn the alphabet, make learning about letters a hands-on experience. Form letters from many materials – food like cheese or raisins, clothing like socks, anything!

Make an alphabet book with your child. Draw pictures together or cut out pictures from magazines to go with each letter.

To help your child learn the alphabet, use chalk to write letters or words on a chalkboard or sidewalk.

To help your child learn the alphabet, give your child a paintbrush and water. Your child can dip the brush in the water and “erase” what you have written by painting over it with the water.

To help your child learn the alphabet, make letters out of cardboard and have your child put the letter under a piece of paper. Color over the letter with crayons and watch the letter underneath the paper magically appear.

To help your child learn the alphabet, write letters anywhere - in the steam that forms on kitchen windows when you’re cooking, the frost on windows, the dust on your car, or the sand at the park.

To help your child learn the alphabet, invite your child to write an email message to a friend or relative. Ask him or her to tell you what he or she wants to say as you type. Ask your child to help by pointing to letters on the keyboard. You can also help your child handwrite a note to a friend or relative.

[To become good readers, children also need to have general knowledge about many things.] Learning about science and math concepts helps develop this kind of knowledge. This makes it easier for children to understand books and stories when they learn to read.

[To become good readers, children also need to have general knowledge about many things.] Learning about the world helps children get ready to read.

[To become good readers, children also need to have general knowledge about many things.] Children are full of questions about what goes on around them. Use their natural curiosity to help your children learn how to find answers for themselves. As children ask questions and search for answers, they learn new information that leads to more questions and answers.

[To become good readers, children also need to have general knowledge about many things.] The experience of asking a question and looking for an answer helps children learn new information and vocabulary. It helps them become more independent, and it motivates them to want to learn more.

[To become good readers, children also need to have general knowledge about many things.] The process of asking and answering questions gives you and your child chances to talk together. Conversation and interaction with you provide many chances for your child to learn.

[To become good readers, children also need to have general knowledge about many things.] The next time your child asks a question about how something works, you might say, "I'm not sure—let's find it out." Look for answers together: talk, read, and write!

Read information (nonfiction) books with your children so they can learn more about what especially interests them. The library has many information books about science, math, interesting people, other countries, cooking, and much more.

[To become good readers, children also need to have general knowledge about many things.] Math helps children talk and learn about objects and ideas. Recognizing patterns, classifying, and solving problems are also important pre-reading skills.

[To become good readers, children also need to have general knowledge about many things.] You can help your child learn math concepts such as more and less, large and small, long and short.

[To become good readers, children also need to have general knowledge about many things.] You can help your child learn math concepts through daily activities. Talk about ways to sort things, for example foods that are white, foods that come in bags, foods that you keep in the refrigerator.

[To become good readers, children also need to have general knowledge about many things.] You can help your child learn math concepts through daily activities. Notice shapes: find circles, squares, and triangles in everyday objects. Find repeating patterns. Patterns are found in all kinds of math. Look for patterns in clothing, on toys, in leaves and flowers, on cups and plates—everywhere.

[To become good readers, children also need to have general knowledge about many things.] You can help your child learn math concepts through daily activities. Children love to count, measure, sort, and compare. Use their natural interest in math to help them learn new words and concepts.