

Parents: Help children with reading

My daughter just finished kindergarten and is behind her peers in reading. We've had her eyes checked and she doesn't seem to have physical problems that could be the cause. How can we help her get caught up this summer?

There are a number of things you can do — and it's important that you try. A recent report from the Annie E. Casey Foundation revealed the importance of children reading at grade-level by the end of third grade: Through that time, education generally focuses on helping children learn to read. Beginning in fourth grade, education shifts into high gear, focusing on reading to learn. That's a vital distinction, and the foundation's report showed that children who aren't reading at grade level by the fourth grade are more likely to drop out of high school, more likely to be lower wage earners, more likely to be arrested, and more likely to have a child as a teenager. Unfortunately, in 2009, 68 percent of public school children in the United States scored "below proficient" on the National Assessment of Educational Progress fourth-grade reading test, with lower-income children (83 percent) more likely to score below proficient than children from middle- or high-income families (55 percent). It's clear we have a lot of work to do to improve reading proficiency.

Two good places to start looking for ideas are the U.S. Department of Education (see <http://ed.gov/parents/read/resources/edpicks.jhtml>) and the National Institute for Literacy (<http://www.nifl.gov/childhood/childparent.html> —



look for the "Shining Star" series for reading tips for specific grade levels). One key is to make reading to your child an interactive and fun experience. Here are a few tips:

- Let your daughter see you reading, and invite her to read with you every day.
- Point word by word as you read, especially when the type is large. This will help your daughter learn that reading goes from left to right and understand that the word you say is the word she sees.
- Read your daughter's favorite book over and over again.
- Read many stories with rhyming words and lines that repeat. Invite your child to join in on these parts. Point, word by word, as he or she reads along with you.
- Discuss new words. For example, "This big house is called a palace. Who do you think lives in a palace?"

Remember, reading isn't just an activity we do with books. Point out all of the places in your everyday world that have letters and words on them — billboards, signs, food packages, etc. Make noticing words a game: Find words that begin with letters in alphabetical order — apple, boat, camper, dog ...

You might also check your local library; many have summer reading programs that can be motivating for some children. And, of course, the library also will have lots of books you and your daughter can have fun reading this summer.

Family Fundamentals is a monthly column on family issues. It is a service of Ohio State University Extension and the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center. Send questions to Family Fundamentals, c/o Martha Filipic, 2021 Coffey Road, Columbus, OH 43210-1044, or filipic.3@cfaes.osu.edu.



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Dear Subscriber: This column was reviewed by Kirk Blair, program director in family and consumer sciences for Ohio State University Extension.

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