



Speaking for Children

What's best for our youngest children is best for everyone!

Important Building Blocks for Literacy

Raise an enthusiastic and successful reader

It's never too early to start reading with your child. Reading helps kids develop imagination, and it's a great way to spend quality time together. Parents and caregivers can build a strong foundation for literacy by reading to children early and often!

Reading to children gives them the opportunity to explore exciting new worlds and learn about people and places. Research shows that children whose parents read to them tend to become stronger readers and perform better in school.

In honor of the National Education Association's Read Across America Day on March 2nd, First 5 Sonoma County offers the following tips to encourage you and your family to explore the magic of reading together.

Highlight the Fun of Reading

Instill a love of reading in your child by making reading enjoyable.

- Read aloud with your child and ask questions to help him or her follow along. Hearing the sound of a familiar voice engages your child's mind and builds vocabulary skills.
- Inspire a love of words by playing word games, rhyming, singing and telling stories together. Develop your child's language skills by talking about daily activities and sharing stories about your family or culture.
- Allow your child to hold books and turn the pages – kids love to be hands-on! Teach him or her to point to pictures and words on the page and even read the words when ready.

Make Reading a Habit

Read together every day to help your child enter school ready to succeed.

- Begin reading to your child when he or she is a baby – it is never too early.
- Read while on the go; take books everywhere – to the doctor's office, in line at the store, on a long car ride or on the bus.
- Show your child how reading is used all the time, everywhere around us. Together, read street and store signs, maps, billboards, menus and labels on packages.

Encourage Children to Explore the Library

Take frequent trips to the library to enjoy the latest books and free reading materials.

- Sign up your child for a library card, and learn about story times and other free events at your local library.
- Let your child choose books you can read together.
- Create a library at home. Set up an area in your home where a variety of reading materials are always available to your child.



How to Read With a Squiggly Baby (or Toddler!)

Parents know they should read with their child every day. But reading together requires that your baby or toddler will actually sit still long enough for a book! If you've got a squiggler in your house, see if these tips help your reading time go a little more smoothly:

Read before bed, but don't wait too long!

Really tired little ones have a harder time focusing their attention. It may help to pull out your books before the bath, or right after dinnertime. If your child is too tired to read, don't force it. Keep book times happy times.



Choose fun, brightly colored books

The most engaging books for little ones have lots of bright, big pictures. Board books, the ones with stiff cardboard pages, are great for little hands to hold.

Sing along, or have some rhyme time

Books meant to be sung, or books written in rhyme, mean that you and your child get to clap along, sing along, and bounce up and down to the rhythm of the language. The fun physical involvement will keep your child interested in reading.

Be expressive!

Don't worry, no one is listening! As you read the book, change your voice for each character. Say loud words LOUDLY and soft words *softly*. Add hand gestures and foot stomping to go along with the story.

Keep your favorites by your side

Your child will begin to develop favorite storytime books. Plan to read those books until the pages fall out! The repeated, enjoyable experience of reading favorite books goes a long way toward developing good reading habits.

Help your child develop a reading habit

It's important to recognize that reading with a really young child looks and sounds different than reading with an older child. It's louder, with more action and movement. That's okay! The simple interaction with you, your child, and a book sends a powerful message about reading.

This helpful information about reading was provided by Reading Rockets, Colorín Colorado, and LD OnLine at www.colorincolorado.org/article/35051. Visit their Read Aloud section for more articles, printables, and video: www.ReadingRockets.org/atoz/reading_aloud

Sonoma County Libraries

Books, magazines, and resources for families. Programs for children, special events, and summer reading programs. Call or go online for reading and literacy programs and for the address of a library near you. To get a free library card, bring identification with your current address, such as a PG& E bill or driver's license, to the library and complete an application (available in Spanish). Use of library resources is free.

Cloverdale	894-5271	Santa Rosa:	
Forestville	887-7654	Central	545-0831
Guerneville	869-9004	NW	546-2265
Healdsburg	433-3772	Rincon Valley	537-0162
Occidental	874-3080	Sebastopol	823-7691
Petaluma	763-9801	Sonoma Valley	996-5217
Rohnert Park/	584-9121	Windsor	838-1020
Cotati			

About First 5 Sonoma County

First 5 Sonoma County funds children's health insurance and programs that improve childcare quality, help children succeed in school, and help parents provide safe and nurturing environments for their children. For more information on **First 5 Sonoma County** and its programs, please call 565-6626 or visit www.first5sonomacounty.org