

# Ask Professor Petrillo!

Dear Professor Petrillo:

I am a parent with a child, Emily, who is 3 years old. In a couple of years my child will be attending school, and I wanted to know if there is anything I can do now to help her learn to read. It think it would be great if she could actually read before she gets to school. Do you have any advice for parents like me who are interested in promoting reading at such an early age?

Sincerely,

Emily's Mom  
Albuquerque, New Mexico

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Dear Emily's Mom:

There are many things you can do as a mom to help 3 year old Emily learn to read. It may seem like she is still very young, but the reading process actually begins almost from the time of birth. Here is what I suggest:

- *Read to Emily each and every day.* Assist her in choosing books which have colorful graphics and large print. Ask her questions about what you have read together. After each page you read, show her the pictures and discuss how they relate to the story.
- *Make your home a positive literacy environment.* By that I mean, keep books and magazines all around the house so that she can't miss finding them. Encourage literacy in her bedroom by placing the alphabet letters where she will see them when she goes to bed. Associate these letters with sounds by placing pictures next to the letters. For example, find a picture of an apple to display with the letter A. Often you can find and purchase pre-printed versions like the ones described above by visiting "teacher stores" or teacher websites.
- *Talk to your child often, accentuating correct pronunciation (not baby-talk).* Learning to talk is a fairly natural thing; but it can be enhanced by specifically focusing on development of that skill. Why is talking important to reading? Because by doing so you are developing "Phonological Awareness." This is an awareness of the sounds in our language. This will lead to the development of "Phonemic Awareness" which is the knowledge that words are made up of sounds. Time and again, research studies have pointed to *phonemic awareness* as being the most important prerequisite for learning to read!

Hope this helps you with Emily. In future articles I will discuss what to do as children get closer to school age. Thank you for your letter and good luck with Emily.

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