



10 things to know

before teaching your child to read



1. Learning to read starts with your eyes closed! We don't just pick up a book one day and know how to read it. Reading starts with a strong foundation in playing with sounds in words as we speak, sing, and play. Then we attach letters to those sounds and are ready to read! Get silly with songs you know by swapping out sounds like "happy birthday to you" but make it "Mappy Mirthday Mo Moo"

2. Instead of "sound it out" get in the habit of saying "Let's stretch that word out together" you can help your child do this by saying words s-l-o-w-l-y and then quickly. When they get the hang of it, say "I'll say it slow, you say it fast!" THEN when the word is in front of them, saying stretch it out will help them much more than "sound it out" when they haven't played with sounds in words enough and they are looking at letters.

3. What sounds do you hear? When teaching kids to write we want them to be independent and confident. We won't always be next to them to tell them how to spell a word and then what? When they ask how to spell a word, say "what sounds do you hear?" When they are beginning to spell and read they might just hear the beginning sound and that is GREAT. Help them write the beginning sound for the word. We don't want kids to get too caught up in trying to spell it "right" that they forget what their story or sentence was.

4. Make mistakes on purpose. Perfectionism doesn't stop you doing something the wrong way, it just stops you from doing anything. Let your kids see you make mistakes and let them see that it's ok!

5. Say "I hear those sounds too!" When your child asks if they spelled something "right." We want them to look inward for validation anyway, right?

6. This feels tricky but I can do tricky things. How we talk to and in front of our kids becomes their inner voice. When your child hears you say this, they'll start saying this to themselves. Whether it's in reading or writing or running or meeting a new friend, or getting a shot at the doctor, you want them to whisper this to themselves.

7. I can't do this...YET. Adding YET at the end of your sentence helps your child have a growth mindset. There is NO stopping kids who have a growth mindset!

8. Where do we start our letters? AT THE TOP! Do this early and often! Writing just like reading typically goes top down and left to right. Teaching this early helps kids grow as writers and avoid frustration by the time they get to 2nd grade and school starts moving a bit faster.

9. You don't have to finish the book. This is a message for YOU reading to babies, kids reading books, parents running out of time. For 2 reasons. 1) going slow is better. We comprehend more, soak up more rich vocabulary, can build sensory images in our minds, build language, etc. But 2) kids need to know they don't have to finish a book because they started it. We want kids to read books they love, not read because it's a chore. Same goes for you. You don't have to finish it just because you started it.

10. It's okay if your letters are backwards (for now). Preschoolers learning to write letters think of them as shapes. Actually this is true even through first grade. Just like a shoe is still a shoe upside down, an A is still an A upside down to them. More practice and more exposure like looking for letters on license plates, menus, logos, shirts, and in books will help kids get there!

