



## Inspiring Play through Stories

One of the most important things that you, as a parent, can do to prepare your child for school and instill a love of learning is to read. It is clear that reading to your child will build his language & literacy skills. But, did you know that reading books and stories also boosts your child's creativity? Read to your child every day and use books, stories, and poems to inspire imaginative, creative, and active play. Try these suggestions:

### INFANT:

- Read board books to your child. Use character voices and body movements to engage your baby in the story.

### TODDLER:

- Change the story! Read a favorite nursery rhyme, fairy tale, or familiar story to your child, such as *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*. Have your child:
  - ✓ Change the character(s). Try: "Goldilocks and the Three Princesses" or "Matt and the Three Bears." Have your child help you retell the story with the new characters.
  - ✓ Add different objects to the story. For example, instead of Goldilocks trying each bear's oatmeal, chair, and bed, have her sample different kinds of vegetables, meats, and ice cream to find what she thinks is "just right" for dinner. Re-enact the story using fruits, pasta and milk.
- Have your child retell a TV story in his own words.
- Read books that encourage active involvement. Try reading Dr. Seuss's *Mr. Brown Can Moo. Can You?* As you read, encourage your toddler join in, for instance, pretend to be a cow and moo or fly like a bee and buzz.

### PRESCHOOLERS:

- Retell or act out a favorite story. For example, after reading *We're Going on a Bear Hunt* by Michael Rosen and Helen Oxenbury, go on a bear hunt in your house or at the park; encourage your toddler to pretend she is wading through the long, wavy grass or the deep, cold river.
- Read books to your child. As you read:
  - ✓ Use puppets or stuffed animals to act out the story.
  - ✓ Use fabric as costumes to become one of the characters; act out the story.
  - ✓ Make up a song to go with the story.
  - ✓ Use musical instruments to play music during the story.
- Read a poem to your child. After reading the poem:
  - ✓ Use clay or Play-Doh® to make one of the characters from the poem.
  - ✓ Pick out all the rhyming words and write a new poem.
  - ✓ Paint a picture, showing how the poem makes her feel.

### Book Suggestions

*Olivia Acts Out* by Jodie Shepherd & Patrick Spaziante