



Essential Building Blocks for Literacy

Raise an enthusiastic and successful reader

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Reading to children gives them the opportunity to explore exciting new worlds and learn about people and places. It also creates an appreciation for the fun and educational value books offer, allowing children to expand their imagination. Parents and caregivers can build a foundation for literacy and strengthen the bond with their children by reading to them starting at an early age. 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 2, First 5 Santa Cruz 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 helps stimulate the child's mind and build vocabulary skills.
- Inspire a love of words by playing word games, rhyming, singing and telling stories together. Develop their 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 better prepared.

- Begin reading to your child as soon as you can – 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 a trip 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.

For more information about early childhood literacy, contact First 5 Santa Cruz County at (831) 465-2217 or www.first5scc.org and www.first5california.com/parents.

About First 5 Santa Cruz County

Research shows that a child's brain develops most dramatically in the first five years and what parents and caregivers do during these years to support their child's growth will have a meaningful impact throughout life. Based on this research, California voters passed Proposition 10 in 1998, adding a 50 cents-per-pack tax on cigarettes to support programs for expectant parents and children ages 0 to 5. First 5 Santa Cruz County distributes approximately \$3 million a year in Prop. 10 revenues to programs and services that meet local needs.

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