

LEARNING TO READ WITH THE DINING ROOM CHAIRS

Little children today ride in tiny electric cars or zoom around on the back of other fast vehicles that sometimes hurt them. And parents worry about how they'll afford to buy such a vehicle for their child. Well, here's a way for your child to ***take a play ride for fun that won't cost a cent, isn't dangerous and can help her with skills she'll use for learning to read!***

Maybe you remember pretending to take a trip in a vehicle you made with your family's dining room chairs? Did you line them up in a row to make an "airplane" or "car"? Or did you ever just turn them over on their side so you could sit in the square made by the chair legs and take a ride on your "train"? ***You were lucky! Your family gave you permission to play!***

Now it's your turn to pass on the pleasure to your child. Let him pull the chairs into a train and help him make tickets for his passengers. You could even write signs for the stations or menus for his restaurant car. ***Adding written language to the pretend play is a great way to invite your child into the fun of reading.***

Show your child how she can put a blanket over the top of the chairs and ***voila!*** she's built a cave where a wildcat lives! Or throw a sheet over a cluster of chairs to make a cave big enough for dinosaurs! There are many ways for children to reorganize and build imaginary spaces. ***Organizing and reorganizing objects in space will be good practice for your child. It's a skill she'll use later in learning to read.***

Even the littlest child in your family can benefit from this kind of play. When you talk with your children while they crawl and climb, you'll be helping them learn the words for what they're doing. ***We know that children who learn more words when they are young continue to learn more words when they're in preschool and kindergarten.*** And those bigger vocabularies will help them when they learn to read. But right now, you'll be teaching your children ***what might be the most important lesson they learn from you: that you love being with them and like what they're doing.***

When you allow your child to reorganize things in your house to create new, imaginary spaces—and if you'll sometimes play along—you'll help her feel confident that she has good ideas and that you approve of the way she thinks. ***That feeling is the foundation for success in learning.*** It can give a youngster confidence later when she's in school and will be learning many new things.

So forget about the expensive (and dangerous) miniature cars and let your child make his own—with the chairs from the dining room. He'll be building his brain—instead of risking it—and ***you'll be helping him get ready to read!***