

LEARNING TO READ ON FAMILY FIELD TRIPS

Do you remember field trips in school when you were a child? They were special events when you and all the students piled into a school bus and went somewhere—maybe the zoo or the aquarium. Did you know that ***right now you can help your preschool child develop the skills she'll use later when she's learning to read by planning little "field trips" to your backyard, around the block, or to ordinary places like a near-by construction site?***

For example, if your child adores big trucks, you could plan to visit a construction site, just to look at the heavy machinery and to ***talk about what you see***. When you get home, ***ask your child to talk about what he remembers most about the trip***. You can help by filling in the words he might not remember, like ***power shovel*** or ***crane***. ***If you take pictures at the work site, later you can put those in a little photo album to make a very special book, using your child's own words*** to describe what he saw at the construction site.

If you visit the zoo, be sure to ***take time to read at least some of the signs about the animals***. Ask what your child already knows about the animals you're looking at together and then add some information from the zoo's signs. ***Talk about the animals: their size, what color they are, and what kind of food they like to eat***. Again, if you take photos, use those to ***make your own zoo book, using your child's very own words***. You'll probably find that she wants you to read it over and over. And, then, you might find her pretending to read it herself. ***One day in the future, she really will read it!***

You don't have to have a whole lot of time to take a little field trip with your child. A simple trip to a local pet store can be a fine field trip for a child who loves animals. Just looking at the fish in their tanks, listening to the birds or petting a hamster or a guinea pig, can be a wonderful way to spend a little time talking together.

A walk through the park or even your own backyard can be a field trip when you don't have much time, but you want to make it special for your child. You could look for signs of the season: if it's spring, are the trees beginning to get their leaves? Are there blossoming plants? If it's fall, have the leaves changed colors? Are they beginning to fall? If you take along a paper bag, your child can bring home leaves or blossoms to make a collage. Or he might pick up some little stones for beginning a rock collection.

Just a little field trip can give you and your child time to look at things together, to talk about them, and to remember later what you saw. ***All this is terrific practice for getting ready to read. Plus, it's a lot of fun and a great way to let your child know that you enjoy your time together, too!!***