

GETTING READY TO READ: GETTING DRESSED IN THE MORNING

Luckily, it's very easy--and it's really enjoyable--to help young children develop a very important skill that will help them when they're learning to read. We're talking about the ability to talk well:

Preschool children who are able to use language well tend to become children who have bigger vocabularies when they enter school. And those children who know many words and can talk easily with others often do better when it comes to learning to read.

What can you do at home to help your young child? Well, *talking to very young children is the best way we know to help them grow their language skills.* Even the tiniest babies love to hear their mother's and father's voice talking to them. Even newborns turn their heads towards the sound of their parents' voices. And they smile and coo more to people who smile and coo back to them. Doesn't it make sense, then, to talk with your young child?

Some parents wonder what they should talk about when they're talking to their baby or toddler. The answer to that question is simple: *anything and everything!* You might tell your new baby what you're doing as you get him ready for his bath. And you could describe the food you're preparing for your toddler's lunch. And *you could surely talk to your preschooler about the clothes he's putting on as he gets ready to go to his childcare center or preschool program.*

Talk to your child about the colors of her clothes. Comment on her choices: this shirt vs. that one; pants vs. a dress; socks vs. tights, etc. Do her shoes have a *buckle*? Is that a new word for your daughter? Do her tennies have a *velcro* fastener? Or do they tie with *laces*? Will she wear a *sweatshirt* or a *jacket*? Does it have a *zipper*? Or how many *buttons* does it have? What color are they?

You're getting the idea, right? *Almost everything you do with your child in the morning—even just getting dressed for the day—can be a chance for him to learn new words.* And what may be even more important, *it's a chance for him to talk with you,* for him to practice his new language skills.

So have a good time now—and you'll see that all this practice now, even just talking in the morning, will serve your child very well later in school, when it's time for reading!

