

LEARNING TO READ BY PLAYING HOUSE

Little children love to pretend they're big. They like to wear their mother's jewelry and their father's boots. You might overhear your child playing house with dolls or super-heroes. ***Both little boys and little girls like to practice being grown-up*** by pretending to be a mom or a dad, putting their pretend children to bed or preparing a make-believe dinner. When they play house, little children get to drive away in cars or ride on motorcycles; ***they can do anything and everything a big person does***. And they love that!

It's good to know ***this kind of play—which goes on everywhere in the world—helps young children grow the skills they'll need later*** for the “real thing,” their lives as young adults. And it's good to know your child is growing the skills he'll need later for becoming a reader!

When your child plays house, she assigns roles in the story she creates. She makes herself into another person (she becomes a mother or the doctor who comes to examine a sick baby) and she makes her friends, her toys—and maybe even you!—into other people, too. She creates a story which her characters act out. She might even include music and dance. For sure, there's lots of language as the characters interact. ***This kind of play is helping her understand how stories are formed and what makes a good one.***

Later when your child is learning to read, ***this experience playing house may help him understand the stories he sees in print in books***. He'll already know about how stories are about characters who have relationships; how stories have a beginning, a middle and an end. Chances are good, too, that ***he'll also have a fine, big vocabulary***—many words he learned and practiced, just by playing at home.

If you and your child want, ***you could write down some of the stories that occur when your child plays house. You might even photograph some of the play***. Then, later, you can put the words together with the pictures and ***you'll have a little book about the story your child created***, all by herself. That way, she can share the book with others—she might pretend to read it so many times that, one day, you'll see she's memorized it. ***She believes in herself as a reader. And that is terrific!***

Playing house and pretending you're big give little children so much pleasure. ***It's great to know that this kind of play also helps your child grow into reading!***