

LEARNING TO READ IN THE CAR

Everyone tells you that it's important for you, as a parent, to help your child learn, but you're a busy person and it's hard to find time to talk, listen and read to your child every single day. Today's parents have to make their time do *double-time*. Here's how to make the most out of your time in the car to help your young child with the skills she'll need later to learn to read.

❖ Of course, *look for billboards and signs everywhere and point them out to your child*. Read the letters to him, if they're large. If they're the letters that spell his name, he'll have more interest. And if they spell out things he likes, like *burritos* or *state fair*, he'll probably especially want to look for those words!

❖ *Did you know that looking for cars and trucks that are alike and different also helps?* See if your child can notice the difference between the two blue pick-ups that are right in front of you. Does he see that one has a tool case and the other doesn't? Or that one has a white roof and the other one is completely blue?

Looking for things that are alike and different is good practice for children who later will be looking for letters and patterns of letters in words that are alike and different. You can practice that skill right now, just driving to your child care center or back home again.

❖ If you have a cd or tape player, of course, you could play stories for your child to listen to as you drive. But *you could also bring story tape cassettes along to play in a simple tape player that you can teach her how to work on her own*. Then she can start and stop and change the tape herself. *What a great way to help her know she can do things for herself and practice listening to stories at the very same time!*

❖ *Another wonderful way to make the most of time in the car is simply to talk with your child and listen to him when he talks to you*. We know that the more adults in a family talk with a child, the more words he'll learn. And we also know that the more words he learns, the better off he'll be when he starts to learn to read.

So some of the time, at least, hang up that cell phone, turn off the radio or the cd or the tape player and just talk with your child. Tell her about your day and ask about hers. If yours is a child who doesn't talk a lot, try to draw her out with open-ended questions like, "What was your favorite part of today at child care?" or "What did you play when you all went outside?" If you know who your child likes to play with, ask if he or she was at preschool today and what they did together.

Use your best skills to start a conversation and keep it going. As time goes on, and you notice your child's ability to talk growing stronger, you can feel glad you helped him get ready to read just by talking with him in the car when he was a little boy.