

Reading Activities in the Neighborhood

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When you and your child walk and ride in the neighborhood, your child learns about his community. He also learns about the people who live and work there. When he meets people who work in the neighborhood, he can learn about different jobs and careers. In the process, he learns social skills and how to have conversations with people.



Baby/Toddler

What Comes Next? Once your toddler is a little bit familiar with your neighborhood, play a simple memory game. For example, as you pass a house where a big dog lives, say “Where does that big, furry dog live?” After your child responds, point to the house and say “She lives right there in that red house! I wonder where she is today?” After you have played this game a few times, you can ask the same question, but change where you ask it. Ask it before you get to the dog’s house, or after you’ve passed it.

Walk Around the Block. Take your toddler for a walk in your neighborhood and enjoy the sights and sounds together. As you pass, name people and places for your child. “Look, there’s our mail carrier!” Then add more details. “I wonder if she will bring us a letter.” After a few walks, ask your child to make simple predictions. “Do you think we will see that big dog today?”

A Trip to the Library. Before you go to the library, tell your child that a library is a place where you borrow books. “You can borrow story books and information books.” Then, ask the librarian to show you the children’s books. Explain to your child that the librarian is a person who works at the library. He knows a lot about books. Then pick some books out to look at together.

Preschooler/Kindergartner

Sound Walk. As you walk in the neighborhood with your child you can play a fun sound game. Look for people and things with names that start with the same sound. Ask your child to close his eyes. Then tell him to open his eyes and name the first thing he sees- “A dog!” Say the sound that the letter “d” makes in the word dog. What other things can we find that start with the same sound? Look for things like doors, dolls, donuts, and daddies. Give your child help by saying things like “There’s a truck. Does that start with the same sound as dog?”

Meet the Mail Carrier. Explain to your child that a mail carrier brings letters and packages that people send to you. She also takes your letters and packages to other people. “Letters and packages can travel all over the world.” Help your child think of questions she wants to ask the mail carrier. “How do you carry all those letters and packages?” Then, sit outside one day when the mail carrier is making her rounds. She will be thrilled to meet you and your child, and answer questions about her job.

Guessing Game. You can sit on your steps outside and play a guessing game with your child. Notice something, but don't look at directly at it. Give your child a clue and see if she can guess what you are thinking of. For example, "I am thinking of something with wheels. It is painted black and it makes a lot of noise." After your child guesses "The neighbor's car!" let her have a turn.

A Trip to the Library. Before you go to the library, tell your child that the library has many different kinds of books on many interesting topics, for example trees or animals. Ask her what topic she is interested in, and give her some ideas. Maybe she wants a book about trees and leaves, or maybe she wants a storybook by her favorite author or illustrator. "The librarian can help us find the book we want." When you get to the library, encourage your child to talk to the librarian. She can ask for help to find the book she wants. If your library offers library cards to young children, help her get a library card. Then let her borrow a book to take home.

First-Grader/Reader-Writer

Nature Detectives. When you and your child go outside, take a notebook and pencil with you. Tell him that you can be "Nature detectives." You will use the notebook to record things you see. Encourage your child to look for living things, or evidence of living things. These may be things like a hole in a leaf, an ant hill, or a half-eaten nut. When you find something, encourage your child to write it down, or draw a picture of it. You take a turn drawing and writing something too. Later, during a family conversation, invite your child to show your pictures and talk about what you both found. Everyone can help solve the mystery. "What animal did that or made that?"



Using a Map. Drawing a map is a fun and challenging activity. First, explain to your child that a map is a diagram, or a picture of a place or location. It shows places where people want to go, and the roads and streets that go to those places. People use maps for directions. Talk to him about other maps he has seen. Suggest that you make a map of your neighborhood. Take a walk and get the information you need to make a simple map. "There are five houses on our street, and the store is on the same side as our house." Back at home, give your child a large piece of paper and some crayons. Help him draw your street. Then, let him decide what places to put on his map. Next time you walk, take the map with you for directions!

A Trip to the Library. The library is full of interesting things to find out about. Take a walk around the library with your child and look at the book collections. In the children's section, read the signs on the shelves. Look for words like fiction, non-fiction, biography, history, and geography. Help your child discover what a few of these words mean. "Let's look at some of the books to find out." On another day, encourage your child to talk to the librarian. For example, ask her to show you how to search for library books on the library's computer system.