

Reading Activities at the Mall

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A trip to the mall can be exciting for your child. It can be even better if you have time to window shop. Specialty shops are good places to learn a lot about categories of items like clothing, shoes, jewelry, and books. Shoe stores are really good because the shoes are displayed on shelves. That makes them easy to see and compare. When you read a shoe store tip, think about how you can use it in any store.



Baby/Toddler

Window Shopping. As you walk through the mall, name each store and talk to your child about the things you see in the window. “Look at all those clothes in the clothing store.” When you see something very interesting, stop for a minute. “Let’s look at the puppies in the window of the pet store!”

Entering the Store. As you walk into the shoe store, talk about what you see. Use simple language, repeat words, and be creative. “Shoes, shoes, look at these shoes- big shoes, little shoes, so many shoes!” Tell your child what you are going to do at the shoe store. “We are going to buy party shoes for you to wear to the birthday party!” Listen and watch for your child’s response. Then give her more information. “Yes, party shoes- shiny black party shoes!”

Describing Shoes. As you look at shoes for your child, talk about the different pairs. Place the stroller so your child can see the shoes too. As you pick out each pair, describe them while you show them to her. “These have ribbons on them! Do you like them?”

Your older toddler can hold the shoes as you push the stroller to the register. Encourage her to watch as the cashier rings them up and puts them in a bag. “What’s in the bag? Baby’s new party shoes are in the bag!”

Fun with Books. Malls often have bookstores with a large children’s section. Sometimes there are chairs to sit in while you read. Find a simple board book. First look at the cover and tell your child what the book is about. Encourage your toddler to turn the pages as you read. When you get to the end of the book say “the end!”

Preschooler/Kindergartner

People Rhymes. Sit on a bench where you can see shoppers passing by. Start a rhyming game about the people you see. “Man in red, man in red, you have yellow hair on your head.” Then start a rhyme and invite your child to finish. “Girl in blue, girl in blue, you have buckles on your

Guess What Shoe. Play a guessing game with your child in the shoe store. You start first. “Look at those boots. I think a person wears those in the rain.” Then invite your child to

play. Point to a different type of shoe and ask “where do you think a person wears those shoes?” Confirm your child’s answer by saying “Yes, those are slippers, a person wears those at bedtime.” Or, you may say “No, I think those are sandals. A person wears those in the summer.” When your child gets used to the game, have some fun with it. Point to a pair of high heels and say “I think a person wears those to work in the garden. What do you think?”

Buying Shoes. Explain what you are looking for so your child can help you. “You need new sneakers. You said you wanted green ones.” As you look at the sneakers, use words that describe how they are the same or different- colors, styles, and sizes. Some are small, some are medium, and some are large. “What size do you need?” As she tries a pair on, use words that describe the parts of shoes and feet. “Push your foot in all the way up to the toe. Push your heel down. Pull up the tongue. Let’s fasten the Velcro.”

Fun with Books. Spend a relaxed time in the children’s section at the mall bookstore. Pull out a picture book that looks interesting. Show your child the cover of the book and read the title, and the names of the author, and illustrator. Flip through the book slowly from beginning to end. Invite your child to make up the story by “reading” the pictures. Then read the story to your child.

First-Grader/Reader-Writer

Using the Map. Before you start to shop, look at a diagram of the mall. This is often located right inside the front door. Explain that this is a map or diagram of the mall. Remind your child of other maps that he has seen. First show your child the dot that indicates where you are. Then look for the store you want to go to first. Use your finger to trace a line from where you are to the store. “We will have to walk straight down this hall until we get to the corner. Then we will take a right turn and we will be there.”

Measuring Feet. In the shoe store look for the foot scale. Explain to your child that this is a kind of ruler that measures your foot. “It measures the length and width of your foot so you will know what size shoe to buy.” Encourage your child to put her foot on it. Show her the number at her toe that indicates the correct shoe size. “You wear a size 5 now. Your feet are growing!” If you don’t know how to use the foot scale, ask someone who works at the shoe store to help you.

Fun with Books. For a special treat, go shopping for a book at the mall bookstore. Before you go, share some ideas with your child. Do you both like poetry, or stories about sports, or animals? Does he want to find information, for example, about the trees at the park? When you get to the store, find a salesclerk. “Can you help us? We are looking for a book about” Invite your child to look at some books and choose his favorite one. When you get home encourage your child to write his name inside the front cover. “This book belongs to Jack.”