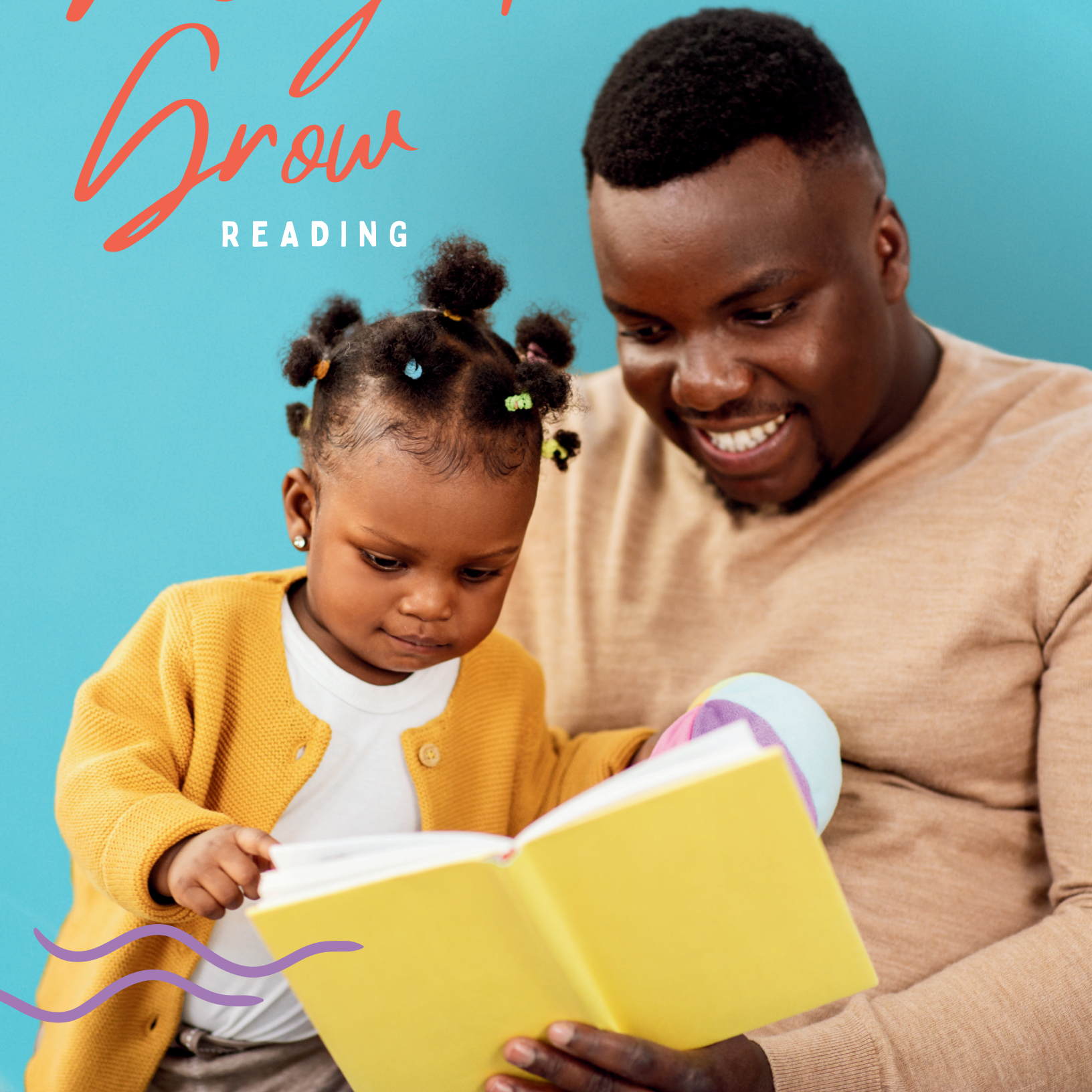


Play & Grow

READING



"TODAY A READER, TOMORROW A LEADER."

- MARGARET FULLER

Welcome to the "Growing Together" Collection! We have curated this collection of play-based activities and resources designed to help kids develop — all while having fun! While supplies last, we also include a small toy tied to each developmental area at our monthly events. Please supervise your children closely while they are playing with toys to ensure there are no choking hazards.

This resource is also mindful of children with different developmental needs, such as Autism. The activities are designed to be inclusive, offering various ways to engage and support every child's unique journey in emotional development. The age range is 0-5 years, and they are chronologically older but developmentally at this age. (Suggested change "The activities are designed for children aged 0-5 years, including those who may be older in years but are developmentally within this age range.")

Please note that while we aim to provide helpful information, this resource doesn't cover everything. The details shared by the Autism Society Inland Empire are meant to be informative. Just a friendly reminder that mentioning resources doesn't mean we officially endorse them.

If you have any questions, the Autism Society Inland Empire is here to help. Our resource Specialists can be reached by email at info@ieautism.org or by phone at 951.220.6922.

Thank you to First Five San Bernardino for their generous financial support in making this project possible,

We hope it brings joy, growth, and understanding to your family, helping your child thrive.



READING TO YOUR CHILD

The first five years of a child's life are critical for their brain development because this is when the brain experiences its most rapid growth and establishes foundational connections. One way to foster your child's development is simply reading to them.

Reading to your child is important because it provides numerous benefits that impact their language, cognitive, emotional, and social growth. It also helps build on their literacy skills, expands knowledge and curiosity, encourages focus, builds imagination, and fosters creativity. It is one of the most impactful activities a parent can engage in, strengthening the bond between parent and child.



8 REASONS WHY READING IS SO IMPORTANT



**RESEARCH SHOWS
THAT READING TO
CHILDREN UNDER 5
HAS NUMEROUS
BENEFITS FOR THEIR
DEVELOPMENT:**

1

Builds Language and Communication Skills: Reading exposes children to a variety of words they may not encounter in everyday conversation. This helps them build a stronger vocabulary and better understand language nuances.

2

Strengthens Parent-Child Bond: Reading creates moments of closeness, helping parents and children connect emotionally. The shared experience of Reading fosters a sense of safety and love, which is essential for a child's emotional well-being.

3

Enhances Cognitive Development: Listening to stories stimulates brain areas involved in comprehension, memory, and critical thinking. Books introduce children to colors, numbers, shapes, and more, laying a foundation for future learning.



**4****Boosts Imagination and Creativity:**

Stories transport children to different worlds and scenarios, encouraging them to think creatively and explore possibilities. Books can spark curiosity about various topics, leading to questions and a desire to learn more.

5**Develops Emotional Intelligence:**

Through stories, children learn about different emotions and how to cope. Reading about diverse characters and their experiences helps children understand perspectives different from their own.

6

Improves Attention Span and Focus: Storytime teaches children to sit, pay attention, and listen actively—essential skills for both school and life. Waiting to see what happens next in a story teaches children to be patient and builds anticipation.


7

Encourages Social Skills: Reading together fosters two-way communication, teaching children to take turns speaking and listening. Stories often feature relatable situations, helping children learn how to navigate relationships and solve problems.

8

Teaches Life Lessons and Values: Many children's books include lessons about kindness, sharing, and perseverance, which can shape a child's character. Books provide a safe way for children to explore challenging topics like loss, friendship, or diversity.





WHEN SHOULD I START READING TO MY CHILD

You can start reading to your child from birth! Even newborns benefit from hearing your voice and the rhythm of language. Here's how reading can help at different stages:



Newborns (0-3 months)

- **Bonding:** Reading helps you bond with your baby and provides comfort through the sound of your voice.
- **Listening Skills:** It introduces them to the sounds and patterns of language.

Infants (3-12 months)

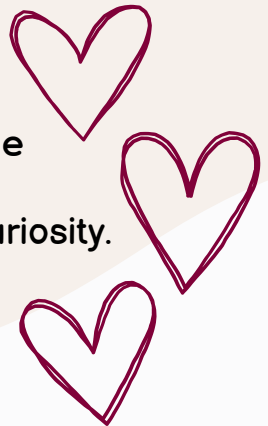
- **Visual Stimulation:** Babies enjoy looking at pictures and bright colors in books.
- **Language Development:** Hearing words helps them start to understand language.

Toddlers (1-3 years)

- **Vocabulary Building:** Reading introduces new words and concepts.
- **Interactive Learning:** Toddlers can start to point at pictures and repeat words.

Preschoolers (3-5 years)

- **Story Comprehension:** They begin to understand and follow simple stories.
- **Imagination and Creativity:** Stories spark their imagination and curiosity.





TIPS FOR READING WITH YOUR CHILD



How to Make Reading a Habit

1. **Daily Routine:** Try to read with your child every day, even just for a few minutes. Bedtime is an excellent time for a story.
2. **Library Visits:** Use your local library to borrow books for free. Many libraries also have storytime sessions for kids.
3. **Free Resources:** Look for free books online or in community centers.

Choosing Books

1. **Reading in the child's native language** can strengthen their language skills and cultural identity and help children become bilingual. Parents should read in the most comfortable language to ensure a positive and engaging reading experience.
2. **Follow their interest:** Choose books about things your child loves, like animals, cars, or fairy tales.
3. **Help them see themselves:** Select books that reflect your child's culture and experiences. This helps them see themselves in stories and learn about others.
4. **Explore the world:** Look for science books and kits that feature diverse scientists and inventors. This can inspire your child and show them that science is for everyone.





What if You Don't Have Many Books?

1. **Repeat Favorites:** It's okay to read the same books over and over. Children love hearing their favorite stories again and again.
2. **Tell Stories:** You can also tell stories from your own life or make up new ones. This helps your child learn to use their imagination.

How to Make Reading Fun

1. **Interactive Reading:** Ask your child questions about the story and let them turn the pages.
2. **Use Voices:** Use different voices for characters to make the story more exciting.
3. **Hands-On Activities:** Engage in simple science experiments at home. This can be as easy as mixing baking soda and vinegar to see a chemical reaction.
4. **Explore Nature:** Take walks and explore your local environment. Talk about the plants, animals, and weather you see.



WAYS TO INSPIRE A LIFELONG LOVE OF READING

READING IS ESSENTIAL FOR OUR EVERYDAY LIVES. WE READ FOR WORK, TO SHOP, TO PLAY, TO GAIN KNOWLEDGE, AND FOR FUN. PARENTS CAN HELP FOSTER A CHILD TO BE A LIFELONG READER IN MANY WAYS AND INSPIRE THE LOVE OF READING.



Here are a few tips to help promote this love of reading from First 5 San Bernardino:

1

Be a reading role model. Let your child see you reading often for pleasure.

2

Anything with written words is considered reading. It's easy to find ways to read everywhere! Words are everywhere, from your breakfast cereal box to signs on the street. Point them out to your child throughout your day.

3

Plan a family book night where you read silly stories, jokes, and riddles to show your child just how fun reading can be!

4

Fill a toy bin or the bottom of a bookshelf with kid-friendly books and coloring pages for easy access.

5

If you have more than one child, ask your older children to read to their younger siblings. The "big kids" will be proud to show off their skills, while the younger children will want to read just like their older brothers or sisters.

6

Replace screen time with book time – in other words, more laps, fewer apps! Your child will learn more from a book than any educational app or TV program. And it helps their imaginations soar!

Remember, consistency is key when reading. Focus on what your child is interested in. Reading to your child is an investment in their future. It builds essential skills, fosters emotional security, and prepares them for academic and social success. Most importantly, it creates lasting memories and a deep connection between you and your child, making it a priceless activity that benefits you both.

FREE RESOURCES

These are a few of our favorite resources, but there are more!

Books

- **Dolly Parton's Imagination Library** is a program that mails free books each month to kids ages 0–5. It launched in 1995 and now mails more than 1 million free books monthly. Enter your zip code to see if the program is in your community.
- **Libraries and bookmobiles.** Your local library is a great place to borrow countless books for free. Some libraries will deliver straight to your door — at no cost to you.

Websites

- **FarFaria.** This site provides a wide range of interactive stories for kids, adding new stories weekly. It also offers offline reading.
- **Storyline Online.** Features videos of actors reading children's books aloud, making it a fun and engaging way for kids to enjoy stories.
- **Unite for Literacy.** Offers a variety of free picture books with audio narration in multiple languages.

Apps

- **Bedtime Stories for Kids.** (ages 4+) This app includes a variety of bedtime stories, Aesop's fables, fairy tales, and more. It offers interactive animations and achievements to motivate kids to read more.
- **Khan Academy Kids.** (ages 2-7 yrs) This app provides a wide range of educational activities, including reading for kids. It's completely free and available on iPhone, iPad, Android, and Amazon.
- **Kidlo Stories For Children.** (ages 1- 8 yrs). Read 240+ interactive stories, including bedtime stories, Aesop's fables, fairy tales, and early reading stories. Kids can read in two modes: 'Read for Me' or 'Read by Myself.'



**Autism
Society**
Inland Empire



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Your local Autism connection

