

Early Learning Parents' Pages

October 2016



Get ready for fun and learning in the autumn weather, learn the best ways to prevent bullying and learn more about the Head Start program.

Fun Fall Learning

When you think of fall, you may think of pumpkins or how leaves change colors. Did you know these thoughts can help you with many [activities](#) to help your child learn math, science and literacy concepts while having fun together in the autumn weather?

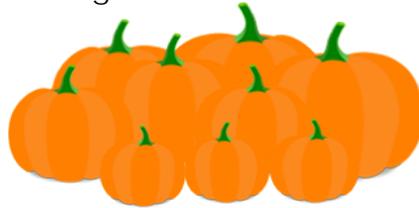
Take your child outside and gather a large bag of leaves to use for a variety of projects. Ask your child to sort the leaves into groups based on size or color or split the leaves into two different groups and count to see which is the larger pile.



Help your child make patterns with the leaves using size or color, such as big-small-big or green-green-brown-brown.

Have a leaf race with your child. Using straws, each person blows a leaf across the table to see whose leaf reaches the edge of the table first. Or take your child on a nature walk to [learn more about trees](#).

Pumpkins have also become a symbol of fall and there are [many ways to use pumpkins](#) to teach your child learning skills.



Take your child to a pumpkin patch or a local produce market and ask your child if she can find a pumpkin the size of her head. When you get home, use a string to measure the pumpkin and another string to measure her head. Have your child compare the two strings to learn a [new math skill](#).

If you buy many pumpkins, have your child talk about how they are alike and different, or have her line them up from smallest to largest.

You can also read stories together, such as [The Legend of Spookley the Square Pumpkin](#), [Pumpkin Circle](#) or [Big Pumpkin](#).

What other ways do you celebrate fall? Tell us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) or [Instagram](#) using #FallEarlyLearning.

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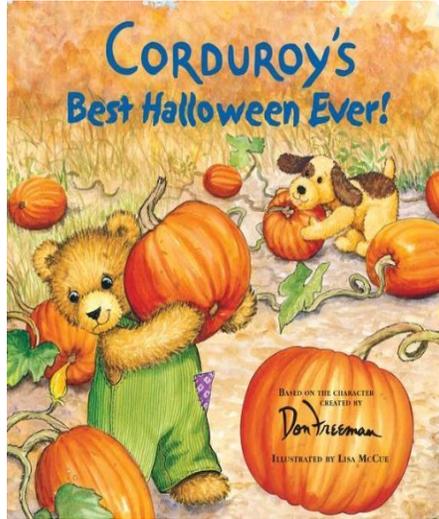
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National Book Month

October is National Book Month and was established in 1989 to recognize and show appreciation for great writing. The month focuses on encouraging children and teens to begin reading for pleasure.

Parents can celebrate National Book Month by reading with their child each day. The national campaign, Read Aloud 15 Minutes, encourages parents to read with their children at least 15 minutes daily to promote strong reading and learning skills.

Reading with your child is the best way to [help him become a reader](#). It helps him add new words to his vocabulary and learn early literacy skills.



“Some children will hear 30 million fewer words than their peers before age 4. Studies have shown the number of words a child knows when entering kindergarten is predictive of future learning success.”

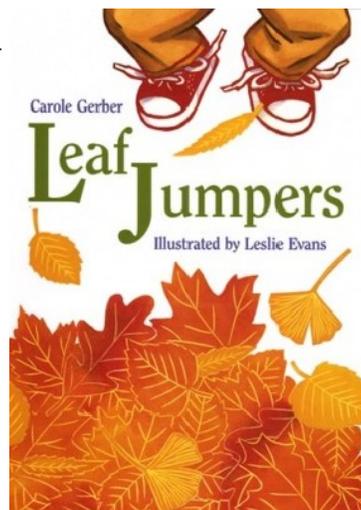
Hart and Risley 2003 – Read Aloud 15 Minutes



If you want to find books that are appropriate for reading to your child, Read Aloud 15 Minutes offers [book lists](#) for children ages 0 to 8.

Visiting a library with your child and asking the librarian to show you books for children in your child's age range is also a great way to encourage reading at a young age.

Look for [books about fall](#) and [special holidays](#) in October and November to read to your child and talk about ways your family celebrates holidays.



Halloween and Preschoolers

Halloween can be a fun time for families, but may be a bit scary for young children.

How will you know if your child will be frightened by the decorations and costumes? Each child is different so you will need to watch your child as she interacts with new people and how she responds in unusual situations.

What frightens her or what does she avoid? Talk with her about the difference between real and pretend situations.

Putting on a non-scary mask and taking it off while your child watches may help her begin to understand that you are the same with or without the mask. Have your child put on the mask and look in the mirror. Ask her if she is the same person when she has the mask on as she is without it.

Don't make fun of your child when she is afraid of scary decorations or costumes. Allow her to watch from a distance until she is comfortable and wants to get closer and interact with others.

According to early childhood professionals, this type of behavior “speaks to the development of emotion regulation. Gradually... with our support, children begin to be able to manage their emotional reactions to various situations... Adult support could be talking or drawing about what the child is scared of... helping him or her know what to expect, or using puppets to act out a story.”

Prepare your child ahead of time and make sure you are taking her to a safe, non-adult, child-friendly party or location to have fun on Halloween.



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Bullying Prevention Month

[Bullying Prevention Month](#) is a time when schools and organizations across the country are encouraged to come together in an effort to educate the public on the impact of bullying and raise awareness about bullying prevention.

If your child is in child care or preschool, should you be concerned about [bullying](#)? Often, young children may be physically aggressive or shout at others when they are angry or don't get their way, but this is not considered bullying because young children are in the process of developing social skills and learning self-control.

If young children are frequently angry or aggressive and not receiving support from their families and caregivers in developing positive ways to deal with their anger and frustration, they may eventually become bullies when they are older.



As a parent of a young child, you want to help your child [develop empathy](#) and react with kindness and understanding when interacting with other children and adults. The most important thing to remember is to be a role model for your child.

When you treat your child and others with [kindness](#) and respect, he will learn to treat others the same way. Talk about your child's feelings and the feelings of those around him or ask him to tell you how he feels.

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Your Child's Health

At every age, parents should encourage their children to make healthy choices and stay fit in an effort to prevent childhood obesity.

You can help your child develop healthy habits as a child that will last a lifetime. By preparing healthy meals and snacks, you encourage your child to eat healthy and enjoy a variety of fresh fruits and vegetables and non-sugary treats.

[MyPlate](#) offers ideas and tips to help you create healthier meals to make sure your family is getting a balanced, healthy diet. If you are the parent of a "[picky eater](#)," offer choices of healthy foods and snacks and try cutting foods into different shapes using cookie cutters. You can also create a "green food night," where you serve mostly green foods for dinner.



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KidCare
Child health insurance
you can afford!

Physically active preschoolers usually maintain a healthy weight, develop strong bones and muscles, and reduce their risk of developing chronic diseases, such as type 2 diabetes. Encourage your child to run, hop, jump, climb and get lots of active play every day.

An active lifestyle for the whole family makes each family member healthier, so turn off all your electronics and find [healthy activities](#) you can do together as a family.

Regular "well child visits" to the doctor are essential to your child's health. [Florida KidCare](#) is a low-cost (or free for eligible families) insurance program for children from birth to age 18 offered by the state of Florida. The program can help cover some of the healthcare your child may need, such as doctor visits, shots and check-ups, hospital visits, surgery, prescriptions, dental and more.

Start paving the way to your child's health today!

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Head Start Awareness Month

Head Start is a federal program offered in 67 counties in Florida, which serves children from age 3 to school-age. Additionally, Early Head Start serves 54 counties providing services to infants, toddlers and pregnant women.

[Head Start began in 1965](#) as a summer program to break the cycle of poverty and meet the social, emotional, health, nutritional and psychological needs of children of low-income families.

The program offers a variety of service models depending on the needs of the local community and is located in family child care homes, centers or schools that children attend for part-day or full-day services, or the children's own home.

Head Start programs provide services to children with disabilities or special healthcare needs and collaborate with local school districts, early learning coalitions, health professionals and other partners to assist the family in coordinating services.

To find a program, contact your [local coalition](#) or use the [online locator](#).



Bullying Prevention Month

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Young children need to learn how to express their feelings in words so others will be able to help them. Teach your child to use "I" messages, such as "I don't like it when you take my toys away from me. It makes me sad." This type of message allows him to tell others how he feels.

Use pretend play to act out situations that cause strong feelings in your child. Role play or use a stuffed animal or doll to show emotions or situations that occur frequently at home or preschool.

Validate your child's feelings with an explanation, such as "I know you are mad because you have to stop playing now, but it is time to eat dinner."

Be patient with your child. It will take some time to develop these social skills. It is normal for a young child to think of himself first and it is difficult for him to know how others think and feel. Teaching your child to show patience and kindness to others will help him become an empathetic person.

November Upcoming Events

November is Florida Family Engagement in Education Month. The Office of Early Learning and the Florida Department of Education encourage all families to work together with schools and child care providers to support their children's learning at school and at home. For information on ways to get involved in your child's education, visit [FLDOE's website](#).

Look forward to Young Readers Day, American Education Week and Take a Hike Day in November's issue of Parents' Pages.



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