

Library Safari



Tips for PARENTS of Young Readers and Explorers

Foray into the library

No matter how young your child is, a trip to the library can be an enjoyable outing for both you and your child. Watching your child interact with the books and getting ideas from the librarian and from other parents can be very rewarding. Exploring the library gives your child access to books and many more learning opportunities: magazines, videos, the Internet, computer instruction, community information, art exhibits, and craft classes, to name a few.

Children who begin visiting the library regularly when they are toddlers discover a wealth of information and literature that is waiting to be explored. They learn how to find information by themselves, and they learn at their own pace. The ease with the library that they acquire will stay with them throughout life, especially when they start school and carry out their own research. Just as important as these skills they gain, at the library children observe people of all ages involved in reading and research.

As a parent, survey the territory first. Make a telephone call to find out which library serves your community, what its hours are, and how to become a member. You should find your library listed in your telephone directory. Find a good time to visit, and you and your child can begin a library adventure.



Charting the territory

Don't be intimidated, even if your local library is large. Most libraries, even big ones, have three main service areas: the circulation department, the reference department, and the children's department. They may have other names, so be sure to ask a librarian if you can't find what you are looking for. Some basic information about these areas follows:

The circulation desk. This is often the first desk you see when walking into the library. Go to the circulation desk to become a member, return your books, and check out books and other items. Ask questions here: How long can you keep items, can you renew items by telephone, and how many items can you borrow at one time?

The reference desk. This section of the library contains any factual information you are looking for; the librarian here can help you find anything from consumer information on strollers to health information on childhood illnesses. This librarian also can help your child do research for school projects.

The children's department. This area of the library contains everything your child will want to read, play with, or look at, including picture books, easy-reading books, nonfiction books, magazines, computer games, and toys. This department organizes fun activities such as book clubs, story hours, and reading contests. The children's librarian can direct you to children's books appropriate to your child's level and interests.

The locations of both the reference desk and the children's department vary from library to library, so ask a librarian at the circulation desk where to find these areas.

Library guides

Don't give up if you are having trouble finding what you are looking for; there are several ways you can get information in the library jungle.

The librarian. Librarians can find the answer to any library question. Introduce yourself and your child, and encourage even your very young child to ask questions. Learning to seek help from librarians will be important when your child has to complete assignments for

school, so it is a good idea to introduce her to the librarian at an early age.

Librarians are ready to help you make the best possible use of the resources, so be sure to ask for the following:

- How to use the catalog to find out what resources the library has on a particular subject;
- Where materials are located in the library;
- Ideas for good books of a particular type for a particular age; and
- Which tools to use to find information, and how to use them.

The catalog. The library catalog is a list of books in the library, on computer or on cards. Use this tool to find books on a particular subject, or to find a specific book. It takes time to become comfortable with any catalog, so ask a librarian for help as often as is necessary.

Libraries divide their materials into groups, such as Juvenile Fiction (JF), Audio-Visual (AV), Easy Picture Books (E), and Nonfiction (NF). Although most groups are arranged on shelves alphabetically by author, the nonfiction group is arranged numerically, often under the Dewey Decimal System. This system is useful because if you know the numbers for the subjects in which you are interested, you can find them in any library. For example, all science books are numbered in the 500s. The categories are even further divided, so you will find books on planets in the 520s, on fish at 597, and volcanoes at 551.2.

If you don't see what you want right away, be sure to ask for assistance. Remember, many libraries borrow books from one another, so even if a book or other publication is not immediately available, you still can request it and the library will get it for you. There may be resources you didn't know were available, so make sure the librarian knows about your special needs.

Explore the jungle

The library is a great place for children to explore the world of knowledge and imagination. Children are never too young to begin

this adventure, and you can be there with your child as she learns. The library has something for every age. Eventually your child may have her very own library card and should begin to take responsibility for the books she selects, so it is advisable to ask about lending periods and fines for overdue books early in your expedition.

Infant. In addition to information about caring for your baby, you will find sturdy board books that your baby can handle, picture books to look at together, and books of songs and rhymes that you can sing to your child.

Toddler. The library has lots of picture books and storybooks that are just right for toddlers. Allow your child to start selecting her own books, and make sure you introduce her to the librarian. Toddlers who enjoy hearing stories can attend story hours just for them.

Preschool child. Your 3- or 4-year-old probably has developed a specific interest in airplanes, animals, dinosaurs, trucks, trains, or princesses; the library has books on all of these subjects. You also will find magazines and videos that will capture your child's imagination. Playtime and story hour offer a chance for your child to meet other children while you read a newspaper or look for books yourself. Be sure to look for books with your child, and to select books to read aloud together.

Kindergarten to second grade. Your child may want to join the library book club and select books on her own to read for it. You can sign up your child for any learning events that are offered, in science, drama, or arts and crafts, for example. In addition to encouraging your child to check out a variety of print materials, you could show her how to use the encyclopedia or other reference sources to find answers to questions that she has asked.

Third through fifth grade. When your child gets homework assignments at school, the library should be a natural place to turn for information. Encourage your child to ask the librarian questions, to use the books in the reference section, and to seek information on the Internet. Continue to seek out books you can share together during family reading time. When your child starts to move out of the children's section

and into the shelves of young adult books when making reading selections, be sure to help her find age-appropriate materials.

At home in the jungle

Visiting the library is a great way to encourage your child's imagination and learning, and it gives you the opportunity to model good reading behavior and to show your child that you value books and reading. Making the library a regular part of your family's life from the time your child is very young means she will be comfortable in the library as a teenager and can develop a lifelong love of learning.

It is never too early—or late—to start visiting the library. Go on a library safari with your child, and you'll be amazed at all there is to discover.

Other brochures in this series include:

- *Get Ready to Read! Tips for Parents of Young Children
- *Explore the Playground of Books: Tips for Parents of Beginning Readers
- *Summer Reading Adventure! Tips for Parents of Young Readers
- *Making the Most of Television: Tips for Parents of Young Viewers
- *See the World on the Internet: Tips for Parents of Young Readers—and "Surfers"

*Also available in Spanish.

Parent brochures may be purchased from the International Reading Association in quantities of 100, prepaid only. (Please contact the Association for pricing information.) Single copies are free upon request by sending a self-addressed, stamped envelope. Requests from outside the U.S. should include an envelope, but postage is not required.

©1999 International Reading Association
Brochure text written by Aedin Clements
Cover photo Michael Siluk
Inside photo Robert Finken

INTERNATIONAL
 **Reading Association**

800 Barksdale Road, PO Box 8139
Newark, Delaware 19714-8139, USA
Phone: 302-731-1600
Fax: 302-731-1057

Web site: www.reading.org

1032 1/99