

# Ten Tips to Prepare Your Child to Learn to Read Braille

Even before children learn to read, there are steps parents can take to get them ready.

Learning to read actually begins at birth. The process includes developing basic cognitive concepts, motor skills, language and communication, and more. Children learning to read braille need to develop their fine motor skills and tactile discrimination as well. If you're a parent, it can be overwhelming, but Perkins is here to support. Here are 10 tips for getting started.

## 1. Give your child lots of access to braille everywhere

Remember that children who are sighted see *millions* and *millions* of words before they begin to read. Print is everywhere: on boxes of food, shampoo, toothpaste, newspapers, magazines, books that can be seen at home, in shops and on television. That's a ton of practice and exposure before a child begins formally learning how to read. It's crucial to provide as much exposure to braille in the environment as you can. Items in the house should be labeled in braille, and every child should have loads of beginning reading materials in braille available that they can find.

See [Creating a Braille-Rich Environment at Home »](#)

## 2. Provide lots of practice developing fine motor or hand skills

Encourage your child to open and close all different types of containers, and to do all types of fasteners on clothing (buttons, snaps, zippers, etc.). Invite your child to help with cooking chores – stirring, scooping, chopping and pouring. While these may not seem important to learning to read, they are.

## 3. Encourage your child to sort, match and categorize items

Ask your child to sort different types of materials – buttons, beans, nuts, coins. It can be anything so long as your child can feel the differences between the items. Have your child sort big/little, rough/smooth, squares/triangles, etc. Be sure to set up the sorting task with distinct places to put items and an organized workspace. For example, mixed coins can be placed on a large plate and quarters can go into one bowl on the left and pennies into a bowl on the right. Your child doesn't need to understand the value of the coins at this point, but just to recognize the difference in size and tactile distinctions.

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<https://www.perkins.org/resource/ten-tips-to-prepare-your-child-to-learn-to-read-braille/>

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## 4. Have your child practice telling stories and sequencing events

Decoding braille is only part of the process of learning to read. Language development is also important. Ask your child to tell you what he did today. Have him name five things he bought at the market. Ask her what she did at school yesterday. What was the first thing he did when he got up? What happened after that? What did she do before bed?

## 5. Help your child understand position, direction and spatial orientation

Practice positional concepts such as up/down, above/below, in front/in back of/next to, top/middle/bottom, left/middle/right with your child. Ask her to show these things on herself (e.g. "Put the cup behind you."). Then ask her to do it with two objects ("Put the book above the plate."). Ask him to point to these locations on a page ("Show me the bottom left part of the page.").

## 6. Practice counting

Count things naturally throughout the day. Count the number of shirts in the laundry basket, the number of forks in the sink, the steps from one location to the next. Count how many people are going to sit at the table for dinner. Then count the chairs and silverware. Match one plate to each place and one cup to each plate. Ask your child how many items are in a set. For example, give her eight spoons and ask, "How many spoons are there?" Next give her a larger array of items and ask her to make a smaller set. For example, give him 10 nuts and ask her to give you six of them.

## 7. Provide opportunities to increase tactile discrimination

Create tactile books to give your child exposure to different items. Check out these posts for ideas on object books and tactile books:

- [Getting books into the hands of my 3-year-old, deaf-blind son](#)
- [Book About the Concept of Big and Small](#)
- [Book-Making Party](#)

Next, give your child more formal practice by braille single cells that are the same, with one letter that is different. For example, you might braille a line of a, a, a, a, a, l, a, a, a. Ask your child to find the one that's different. Braille his name and put a different word in and ask him to find it. For example, Ahmed, Ahmed, Ahmed, Ahmed, puppy, Ahmed, Ahmed, Ahmed. You can make this harder and harder as he gets better at it.

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## 8. Create Experience Stories

Invite your child to dictate a story about an event. Write down what she says in print and braille and then have her read it aloud with you over and over. This will help her to begin to understand that the braille code is associated with meaning, and that each braille word on a page corresponds to a spoken word. This is also a way to motivate her to create her own books.

Read more information about Experience Stories:

- [How to Create an Experience Book](#)
- [Tactile Experience Books](#)
- [Language Experience Books](#)



## 9. Encourage your child to “scribble” on the braillewriter

Reading and writing go hand in hand when developing literacy skills. Children who are sighted practice scribbling with crayons and markers long before they begin to write actual letters. Similarly, children who are learning braille should have practice making marks on paper using a braillewriter or slate and stylus.

Read more: [Scribbling with My Son Who Is Deafblind »](#)

## 10. Read every day!

We started this post by suggesting that your child should have lots of exposure to braille all around the house and in every environment possible. It's also important to read stories with him or her every day. In the United States there are many ways to get free braille books. If you have difficulty getting access to books in braille, you can contact the Association for the Blind nearest to you. The exposure to braille in general is important, but it's equally important for your child to begin to understand that braille is a code for spoken language. Hearing stories read aloud are a great way to begin that process – and inspire a life-long love of reading.



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