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A love of literacy begins at birth

Award-winning children's book publisher offers reading and literacy tips for families with small children

Mt. Pleasant, S.C. (Sept. 22, 2008) - Adults who love to read begin as kids with supportive families. A passion for the written word starts in the crib, but how can parents, grandparents, aunts, and uncles keep their footing on the slippery slope of kids who'd rather watch *Sesame Street* than read a book? Donna German, editor and co-founder of Sylvan Dell Publishing—and homeschooling mother of three—offers the following reading and literacy tips to help you navigate unfamiliar terrain.

General Tips for Reading with Children:

- Read with feeling and emotion.
 - Pause in areas for children to guess what might come next. (How will the blackberry feast be interrupted in Sylvan Dell's [Blackberry Banquet?](#))
 - Make it a routine – at bedtime, rest time, ([Animals are Sleeping](#), [Water Beds: Sleeping in the Ocean](#), and [River Beds: Sleeping in the World's Rivers](#) will gently lull your little one to sleep) or at different times of the day, instead of watching TV.
 - Have books available – always! It doesn't matter if they are your books or library books.
 - Make library trips a regular event – every time you go to the grocery store or each week on a particular day.
 - Go to story times at local libraries or bookstores.
 - Be silly – relate meals or things you do to books you are reading. (A “Comet Cookie” recipe is in the For Creative Minds section of Sylvan Dell's [Pieces of Another World](#).)
 - Going to the zoo? Read a book about going to the zoo before going. Ask the child(ren) what animals they remember from the book that they see at the zoo. (New release ['Twas the Day Before Zoo Day](#) works like a charm!)
 - After reading a book, go back and look at the illustrations. Often illustrators have things hidden in the art for children to find! (Karen Lee's illustrations in [One Odd Day](#), [My Even Day](#), and [My Half Day](#) are filled with hidden pictures.)
 - Older children? Have them read to younger children—even if it's just a wordless book and they “tell” the story.
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- Set an example! Be a reader yourself, and let your child see you reading. Maybe even have quiet family reading time instead of watching TV.
- With older children, read books together. Go back and read the classics (*Lord of the Rings*, etc.), novels that have been made into films (*Star Wars*, *Harry Potter*), or the newest young adult novels.

Tips for Reading with Infants & Toddlers:

- Start when they are just born (or even while pregnant...). Select fun-to-read, rhythmic stories. They won't understand the words, but they'll feel the rhythm. You could even read a book or magazine aloud while holding an infant! (Try the rhythmic Sylvan Dell release [*A Day in the Salt Marsh*](#).)
- Board books should be in the toy box.
- Have toddlers help turn pages.
- Wordless books are great for toddlers and preschoolers to make up their own stories about what's happening. Let them "read" to you.

Tips for Slightly Older Children Learning to Read:

- Start to follow words with your finger as you read so children begin to understand that the words say something, that we read from left to right, and how to turn pages.
- Books with repetitive phrases are good for children to chime in and repeat with you; they'll begin to anticipate the phrase. (Multi-award-winning [*The Rainforest Grew All Around*](#) will become a fast favorite.)

Tips for Older Children Already Starting to Read:

- Don't give up on the nightly routine of reading – have child read one page, and you read the next.
- As they become stronger readers, have them read to you, but save the longer, chapter books for you to read to them.
- Use closed captioning when kids are watching TV and use subtitles on DVDs.

Tips for Developing Early Math Skills:

- Count – constantly. Ask "how many" or use numbers. (For example: "Here is one scoop of ice cream for you and one for mommy. That's two scoops of ice cream!" Sylvan Dell's [*In My Backyard*](#) is perfect for these kinds of activities.)
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- After reading a book, go back and count things in the illustrations. How many animals are there or how many times do you see the main character?
- Baking is a great math activity:
 - count items that go into the recipe (Ex: “two eggs”)
 - use the phrases of $\frac{1}{2}$ or $\frac{3}{4}$ teaspoon or cup
 - let the children measure items and put them into the bowl (oh, and definitely accept that there may be messes...)
- Sorting – have children sort items (New release [*Sort It Out!*](#) is just what the math teacher ordered!)
 - By types of toys
 - By colors
 - Have older children sort money (helps them learn coins)
 - Sort Halloween candy by type
 - Sort M&Ms by colors

General Parenting Tips for Educating Children:

- Talk to your children constantly – even infants.
- Explain what you are doing (Ex: “I am changing your diaper.”)
- Relate things to what the children understand. For example, if something will take an hour and they like watching a half-hour TV show, explain that it will take as long as “two *Dora the Explorer* shows.”

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About Sylvan Dell Publishing

Sylvan Dell Publishing, based in Mt. Pleasant, S.C., is on a mission to create picture books that excite children’s imaginations, are artistically spectacular and have educational value. The company specializes in “Science and Math Through Literature” and provides free supplemental parent/teacher resources for every title, along with their newly announced educational resource grant. Founded in 2004, Sylvan Dell’s family has grown to include more than 55 authors and illustrators in the U.S. and Canada, and 35 titles – honored as nominees, finalists or winners of more than 50 book awards – line their bookshelf. For more information about Sylvan Dell’s books, free parent/teacher resources and their educational resource grant, visit www.SylvanDellPublishing.com.
