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# The Ultimate Summer Reading List for Preschoolers

by Janssen Bradshaw

Although your littlest ones may not be reading chapter books yet, there's no reason not to fill their summer with stories. Throw one of these magical, colorful, and funny stories in your bag when you need a break from swimming, building sand-castles, or playing outside.



#### I'm Ready for School

by DK

If your child is getting ready to head to kindergarten, this series is the perfect way to gently talk about different aspects of school, from morning routines to social skills as well as basic Pre-K knowledge. It's super interactive, presenting a fun and stress-free way to discuss the new changes coming their way.



#### Richard Scarry's Busytown Treasury

by Richard Scarry

Richard Scarry is a total mastermind and his works have become classics for good reason.

There are so many things to look at in these books, plus they make a beautiful introduction to places in the grown-up world, such as the post office, hospital, and grocery store. This is the perfect read for a long trip, since it contains enough to keep young readers interested for hours.



#### Hi! Fly Guy!

by Tedd Arnold

Buzz catches a fly to enter in the pet show, but everyone tells him a fly can't be a pet. Can this unusual dynamic duo prove them wrong? With Tedd Arnold's fun illustrations and clever writing, this book kicks off the perfect series for children who are either starting to read on their own, or looking for books their parents can read them over and over again.



#### The Thing About Yetis

by Vin Vogel

Yetis love winter. They love hot chocolate, building snowmen, and enjoying cozy activities inside. But sometimes they'd like to experience the perks of summer too, like eating popsicles, swimming, and having picnics outside. Whichever seasons we love most, this book reminds us to look for the benefits of all of them. (If what you really want is a yeti to play with, I'm no help there.)



#### **Duck! Rabbit!**

by Amy Krouse Rosenthal and Tom Lichtenheld
When I worked as an elementary school librarian, this was one of my very favorite books to read aloud to kindergarteners. First I'd cover the title and ask the children to decide which animal it was. I'd ask them to raise their hands if they saw a duck, and the looks on the other children's faces — those who saw a rabbit — were priceless. This book is quick, clever, and just so much fun.



#### **Mustache Baby**

by Bridget Heos, illustrated by Joy Ang

We all know a mustache can be funny — but it's even more hilarious when that mustache is on a brand new baby and the baby's parents have to decide if it looks like a good-guy mustache or a bad-guy one. My kids are in hysterics every time we read this one, and the sequel, *Mustache* 

Baby Meets His Match, is just as good.

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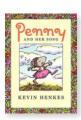
by Janssen Bradshaw



#### **Monkey Not Ready for Kindergarten**

by Marc Brown

You are probably familiar with Marc Brown from his classic **Arthur series**, and this new book is every bit as charming. Monkey is starting kindergarten in one week and he's not ready at all. Bit by bit, his family helps him address his worries so that when the big day arrives, he's finally ready. Perfect for your child who is worrying about starting school in the fall!



#### **Penny and Her Song**

by Kevin Henkes

My three- and five-year-old daughters are WILD about this series; I've probably read each of the three books at least 100 times. Kevin Henkes is the master of drawing cute mice, and Penny is one of his best. In the first book in the series, she comes up with an original song at school, but her family is too busy to listen until after her younger siblings finish their nap and the family eats dinner. It's ultimately worth the wait — and the family's dance party is just the cutest thing ever. The **second** and **third** books are just as good.



#### A Stick Is an Excellent Thing: Poems Celebrating Outdoor Play

by Marilyn Singer, illustrated by LeUyen Pham
I love reading poetry to my children, and they enjoy all sorts of collections, but this is their favorite. Since it's all about outdoor play and activities — including running through sprinklers, playing freeze tag, and blowing bubbles — this is the perfect book for summer. Marilyn Singer is a genius at what she does, and this book is the perfect combination of great verse and fun illustrations.



#### **Bink and Gollie**

by Kate DiCamillo and Alison McGhee, illustrated by Tony Fucile

I love Bink and Gollie so much. Every bit of these books is brilliant, from the dialogue to the illustrations, and on the whole they are much better than many early chapter books. They're clever, funny, and just plain perfect.

# 10 Things You Can Do This Summer to Get Your Child Ready for Kindergarten

by Melissa Taylor

he summer is the perfect time to help prepare your child for the transition to kindergarten. Here are some things you can do at home to get them ready.

#### 1. Be Chatty

Parents who regularly interact with their children build their children's word bank. Whether at the grocery store, the park, or on a walk, those back-and-forth conversations are so important. Keep them up. The more words your child knows, the better she'll do academically.

#### 2. Read Aloud

Reading to your child teaches her many things that we adults take for granted. Kids learn basics such as how to hold a book, left to right reading, wondering what will happen next, and discovering new words. Read aloud every day. It's the easiest way to get your child ready for school.

#### 3. Practice Independent Tasks

When your child is at school without you, he needs to be able to do the following things independently:

- going to the bathroom (unbuttoning and fastening pants)
- dressing (changing clothes, zipping coats, and fastening shoes)
- eating lunch (opening juice boxes)
- separating from parents
- knowing his full name and phone number
- following two-step directions

#### 4. Do Dress Rehearsals

Prepare your child for what to expect in kindergarten. Have play dates with classmates. Tour the school. Talk about what to expect during a school day. Play "kindergarten" at home. Think of a fun way to say good-bye and hello, maybe a secret handshake to do when you drop off and pick up. Above all, be enthusiastic about the upcoming school year.

#### 5. Play and Learn

Children learn through play. When your child plays, you can weave in learning by introducing new words and concepts, and helping her stretch her thinking. Here are some examples of what you could say if your child is playing with cars.

- "Did you know that a someone who fixes cars is called a mechanic? Want to pretend to be mechanics?"
- "Let's see if we can draw a car."
- "How many cars do you have?"
- "What other words rhyme with car? How about star?"
- "What letter sound does car start with?"

#### 6. Practice Facts and Figures

Can your child count to ten? How about recognize any numbers when written? Work on these skills as well as knowing basic shapes, colors, and sorting for numeracy readiness. For literacy readiness, be sure your child knows the alphabet, how to write her own name, how to rhyme, and at least some of the letter sounds.

#### 7. Take Field Trips

Studies show that children with a wealth of background knowledge have better vocabularies and more advanced

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reading skills. So believe it or not, even trips to the zoo, shopping at the farmers market, or adventures at the beach count as kindergarten prep. They're building your child's background knowledge!

#### 8. Focus On Big and Small Movements

Fine motor skills and gross motor skills take intention and repetition. Practice cutting and drawing lines — both squiggly and straight — to build those fine motor skills. For gross motor skills, help your child hop, jump, run, kick a ball, and catch a ball. Watch his balance and coordination improve as you practice these skills.

#### 9. Emphasize Socialization

Keep up those play dates with other kids. It's important your child know how to take turns, share, listen, and cooperate with others. If he lacks in any area, give him opportunities to practice. Continue to help your child learn about feelings and what is acceptable behavior.

#### 10. Don't Forget About Sleep

About a month before kindergarten starts, sync bedtime and wake-up times to the upcoming school schedule. Five-year olds need about 11-12 hours of sleep per day to be ready to learn.

# Planes, Trains, and Automobiles: Family Travel Essentials

by Denise Schipani

Planning something epic for summer travel? Whether you'll be spending hours on a plane or hours (or days) in your car, you'll need some strategies, starting with a good sense of humor and spirit of adventure. Here's our thoroughly modern list of Road Trip Survival Essentials. And while books are an obvious first, they're not you or your kids' only needs:

**Books:** This one is obvious, but it's worth planning. Is there a series your kids have been dying to dig into? Or one your whole family might like — if only you had the time? Long trips lend themselves to, say, the whole **Harry Potter series in audiobook form.** Or, the treat for your kids of the next ten **Magic Tree House books**. Slip in surprises, so that if your kid is bored with the choices she made, you can present a new book or audiobook.

**Maps:** Yes, you're using GPS; who wouldn't? But there's something retro-fun about breaking out a big atlas and showing the kids where you're going and marking the route you'll likely take. You might consider making photocopies of pages and putting them on a clipboard so the kids can follow along and draw on the maps.

**Checklists:** We often drive from New York to Washington, D.C., and we never leave home without a pre-printed list of the 50 states and a few Canadian provinces, so we can check off license plates as we see them. And yes, even in that relatively short route, we have gotten as many as 35 states and two or three provinces checked off. Still looking for Alaska...

**Picnic supplies:** You may be planning to snack or consume packed lunches in the car, or stop at roadside diners or highway rest stops. But be prepared for possible picnics, too; just toss a blanket in the back of the car. If you have room, pack camp chairs and/or sports equipment.

**Recording device:** On a long road trip my family took in the late 1970s, my dad got us the *coolest item ever*: a tape player that we could plug into the cigarette lighter. Not only could we listen to tapes (mostly kiddie stuff, thanks to the addition of my toddler brother), we could *record*. Your kids, depending on their ages and your stomach for handing over your smartphone, can record a travelogue to listen back to later — much better than our approximately 400 listens of Sesame Street's Greatest Hits.

**Bag of tricks:** My friend Claudia took her three daughters back to her native Argentina many times over the course of their childhoods — a 14-hour plane ride. She survived with this tried and true trick: three backpacks stocked with dollar-store ephemera they could pull out and delight themselves with periodically.

**Survival kit:** You probably thought of things like a first-aid kit and water bottles. But also consider stashing a bag with sweatshirts and/or blankets, chargers for everything and/or batteries, snacks that don't require either refrigeration or wet-naps to consume (like trail mix). But bring wet-naps, too. Why not!

Whatever you do this summer, happy travels!

## 6 Engaging Audiobooks for Preschoolers

by Jennifer Ridgway

Audiobooks can be a wonderful learning tool for preschoolers, helping kids expand their imagination and strengthen their listening, pronunciation, and comprehension skills. They're also excellent travel companions. Here are six great ones.



#### The Frogs Wore Red Suspenders

by Jack Prelutsky, narrated by Jack Prelutsky
This is a great example of how an audiobook
can turn a printed book into something altogether different. Prelutsky is well known in children's publishing for his collections of poems,
but this audiobook proves he also has skills as
a musician. He's taken his poems – rich with
geography and vocabulary – and turned them
into fun songs the whole family will enjoy.



#### The Gruffalo

by Julia Donaldson, narrated by Hal Hollings

The Gruffalo won an award for being a great
read-aloud book, so it's no surprise it works well
as an audiobook. Hollings uses different voices
to bring each of the animals to life. The story
of a young mouse that invents a frightening
creature named the Gruffalo to keep the other
animals from eating him will entertain listeners
young and old.



#### Where the Wild Things Are

by Maurice Sendak, narrated by Peter Schickele
Sendak's modern classic about a young boy
sent to his room without dinner who then sails
away to tame the beasts is great as an audiobook. Schickele's wonderfully gravelly voice and
perfect monster noises bring the beasts to life.
There is also a catchy tune in the background,
which helps set the mood for the listening
experience.



#### The Cat in the Hat and Other Dr. Seuss Favorites

by Dr. Seuss, narrated by Kelsey Grammer, John

Cleese, John Lithgow, Billy Crystal, and more
Dr. Seuss is such a fun read-aloud experience,
and the actors brought in to narrate these
stories make the audiobook supremely entertaining. You can listen to it all at once (during
a long car trip, perhaps) or break it up by
individual story. The audiobook is formatted
into chapters, so you can easily navigate to the
particular story your child wants to hear.



#### Winnie-the-Pooh

by A.A. Milne, narrated by Peter Dennis

Peter Dennis's narrations are the only narrations authorized by Christopher Robin Milne,

A.A. Milne's son. The production is a magical experience, bringing the Enchanted Place to life for listeners. Soothing music introduces the book and provides a bridge between each of the ten stories, and subtle nature sounds help to immerse the listener in the tales. Dennis deftly changes voice and mood to perform all the various characters.



#### Frog and Toad Audio Collection

by Arnold Lobel, narrated by Arnold Lobel
Frog and Toad have been favorites of many
generations of children, helping instill the true
magic of friendship along the way. This audio
collection includes all four Frog and Toad books.
Lobel himself narrates, and he proves to be an
able narrator, infusing his characters with great
charm and humor.

## Delightfully Distracted: Great Learning Games for Car Trips

by Melissa Taylor

Whether on short trips to the store or long road trips, car games help make travel time more entertaining and distract your kids from the monotony of the drive. Even better is if those games help your kids learn. See what you think about these car games for the preschool set.

#### 1. Find the Color

One person picks a color to find. The first person to find that color on something outside of the car wins and picks the next color.

#### 2. Alphabet Name Game

Find the letters in your name using signs and license plates. All players can help search.

#### 3. Rhyme Time

Say a word on a sign or something that you see. Try to think of words that rhyme with it. For example: "car" — rhymes with "jar," "star," "bar," and so on.

#### 4. Alliteration Sentences

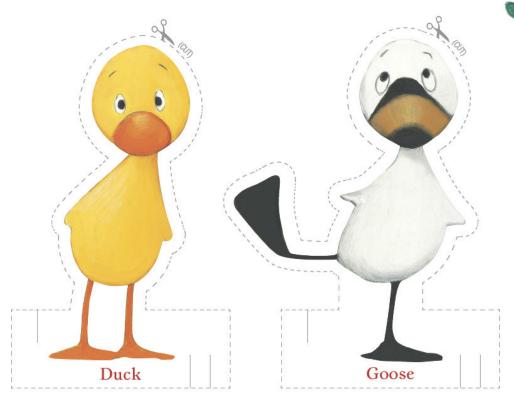
Someone says a letter or sound. Take turns making up silly sentences that (mostly) start with that letter.

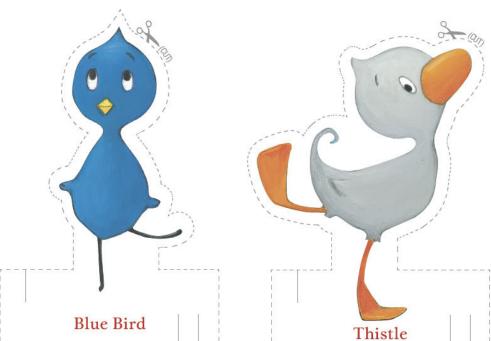
#### 5. I Spy Bottles

Buy or make your own "Find It" or "I Spy" bottle. These contain small items that are mixed in with a lot of rice and glued shut. Kids shake the bottle to find the items.

# **Duck & Goose Finger Puppets**

With the help of an adult cut out these characters, wrap them around your fingers and lock in the tabs.



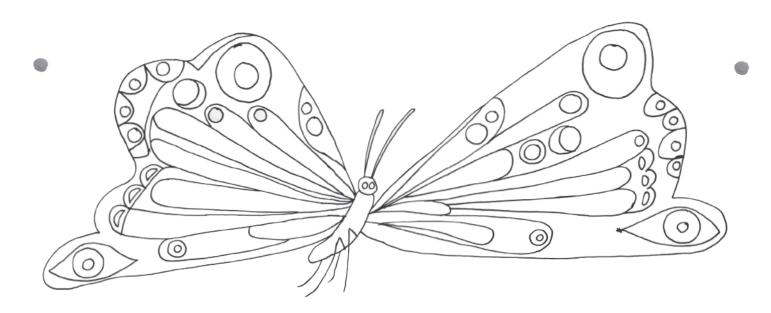


DuckAndGooseBooks.com

llustrations @ Tad Hills

schwartz & wade books

# Very Beautiful Butterfly The Very Hungry Caterpillar transformed into a beautiful butterfly! Use your imagination to color this butterfly.



# Caterina and the Best Beach Day Coloring Page





## Reading Bright Start! Happy Readers, Healthy Kids Tip Sheet

For more tips and activities to build Happy Readers, Healthy Kids visit ReadingBrightStart.org.



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#### Stories on the Go



This simple take-along activity can help you become a storyteller no matter where you are. Just pull out a photo card and describe what you see. You might even make up a funny story or use two photo cards to weave a tall tale! Prep: None | Activity Time: 5-6 Minutes

## **Supplies**

- handmade photo card library:
  - index cards
  - glue or tape
  - old magazines or store circulars
- sealable sandwich bag

#### Instructions

Step 1: Create your own photo cards with a stack of blank index cards and photos or pictures from old magazines. Cut out photos of interesting people, places and things such as pets, fruits and vegetables, or faces with emotions. Glue or tape a photo onto each index card.

Step 2: Put your cards into a sealed sandwich bag and put them in your purse, diaper bag or car.

Step 3: When you are waiting in line, at a doctor's appointment, or sitting in traffic, pull out a photo card and ask your child to describe the item. For example, you might say, "What do you see in this picture?"

Step 4: Give information about what the item is, how it's used and where you'd find it, and tell a story about your personal connection with the item.

#### Example:

"This is a picture of a red wagon. It has four black wheels and a long handle. One little friend can sit in the wagon, and another friend or grown-up has to pull the handle and take him for a ride. There are wagons at the park. One day, I saw the kids having wagon races at the park. When you get a little bit older, you'll be able to have wagon races with your friends too!"

**Step 4:** Ask your toddler some questions about the photo, and respond to his answers.

#### Example:

You: "Do you think you would like to ride in a red wagon?"

Toddler: "Yes."

You: "Would you like to go fast or slow in the wagon?"



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#### **Bowl of Nonsense**



Many 4-year-olds have developed a basic understanding of rhyming words and can tell you whether two words rhyme, such as hat and bat. If your preschooler delights in all things silly and fun, he will enjoy this game. As you play together, you will be helping your child pay attention to the ending sounds in words, and helping him discover what it means when we say that two words rhyme.

### **Supplies**

- a bowl or basket
- a collection of four to six household items

#### Instructions

- Step 1: Have your child help you find four to five items from around the house to put into a bowl. Say the name of each item as you add it to the bowl. (Example items: fork, cup, marker, candle, keys)
- Step 2: Make up a nonsense rhyming word to match an object from the bowl. For example, you might say yandle to rhyme with candle.
- Step 3: Tell your child that you are going to say the name of something in the bowl in a silly way and you want him to guess the correct object. You might say: "Listen carefully and try to guess which object I am talking about. Find the object that rhymes with vandle."
- Step 4: Acknowledge your child for finding the object that rhymes with the silly word as you repeat the words together. "Yes! Candle sounds like yandle! These words rhyme. They sound the same at the end. Say them with me candle...yandle; candle...yandle; candle...yandle."
- Step 5: Repeat with all remaining items in the bowl. At this age, it is important to give your child lots of fun and upbeat experiences with rhyming. After many successful exposures, your child will be able to find the correct answer on her own. It's about exposure, not mastery. After many exposures, your child will start to "get it."