

## LEARNING TO READ IN THE KITCHEN

Whether you're putting away groceries, preparing food, eating a meal or cleaning up, you can help your preschool child learn the skills now that will help him later with reading in school.

***Let your child help you put groceries away.*** See if she can tell what's in the boxes and packages. Does she know that the ***pictures on the packaging are related to what's inside?*** That's terrific! She already has begun to see that ***symbols*** [the pictures] ***can stand for real things*** [in this case, the food]. That's a first step in learning that other symbols [letters and the words they make] can stand for real things, too.

Does your child ***recognize some products by their logos?*** And ***does he know the name of the big letters on his favorite cereals?*** ***Is he starting to guess what the words say on the packaging?*** That's a good beginning, too, for learning later to recognize letters and the patterns letters make in words, when he's learning the alphabet and beginning to read first words.

Are you going to cook? Will you use a recipe? ***Let your child see you reading***—that's a ***terrific way to show her how reading helps us grown-ups in our daily life.*** If you have time, and the recipe book has pictures, you could show her the pictures of the food you're going to make—again, see if she can recognize from the symbol [the photo], what's in store for dinner or dessert!

Maybe you'll just be popping something into the microwave or the toaster oven. This might be another time for your child to see you reading the instructions. If you have time, ***can your child push the numbers on the microwave to set the timer?*** He'll not only feel important, he'll be getting great practice in looking at the small numbers and recognizing each one.

Even during clean-up time, children can practice good skills that will serve them later as they go to school. ***Make sure your child has a job to do that really matters.*** Doing real jobs—jobs that make a difference—will ***help your child know that she's a capable person, that you count on her and that she can do important things.***

Feeling confident is a great strength for children to have as they start school. ***And you can help your child develop his self-confidence just by inviting him to spend time with you when you're working in the kitchen!***