
I N S I G H T S

FOR FAMILIES



Teaching Children to Use their Public Library



- ❖ **INSIGHTS FOR FAMILIES** is provided by your child's school in recognition of your role as a partner in education. Adapted by Judy McDaniel, communications consultant, from information provided by the U.S. Department of Education.

Most public libraries offer a wide variety of children's books and magazines, with many in Spanish and other languages. In addition to printed materials, libraries often lend audiotapes and videocassettes of children's books and movies, and some libraries are making computers available to the public.

Many libraries also sponsor special programs, including children's story hours, summer reading programs, and homework help. If a child has special needs, ask about services the library offers for children with visual or hearing impairments, those who are gifted, or those who need remedial help.

Here are some things you can do to introduce children to the library:

- ❖ Include children – even toddlers – in tours of the library, and encourage them to come often.
- ❖ Help and encourage children to get a library card.
- ❖ Encourage children to use the library to find information for their homework.
- ❖ Encourage children to ask for help with finding books from reference librarians.
- ❖ Work with the library staff to teach older children how to find things in the library on their own.
- ❖ Teach children how to take care of themselves in public places. Stress common-sense guidelines for behavior in the library.

Library Activities

- ❖ **Become a Member** (*for young children*)
 - Parents of young children can sign up for a library card themselves and check out books to learn stories, songs, and rhymes to use at home to stimulate and encourage a young child's development.
 - Young children should be encouraged to get a library card as soon as possible. (Some libraries will issue a card as soon as a child can write his or her name.)
 - Encourage young children to check out books. This encourages responsibility, too.
 - Take young children to the library for special programs.
- ❖ **Get Into the Act** (*for elementary school children*)
 - Help children enroll in reading programs at the library. Many children earn certificates or other awards for reading books through special library and school programs.

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Library use . . .
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- Help with children's visits to their school library, encourage them to meet their librarian, and see what the library has to offer. Help out with any book fairs that the school sponsors. This is a great way to share your love of reading with children and the community.
- Help children enroll in computer courses the library may offer.

❖ **Reference Desk** (*for more advanced students*)

- Encourage children to use the library for schoolwork. Help them determine if the library has the resources they need or if they need to find other information sources.
- Give children encouragement, advice, and critical assistance if they need it, but resist the temptation to take over an assignment. Let children be responsible for researching and writing their reports.
- Check out the special services your library offers for helping students with school assignments, such as homework hotlines and term paper clinics.