Creating a home that nurtures learning doesn’t have to cost anything besides time. Parents are the first and best teachers. Research shows that talking, singing, reading and playing with your children are the keys to success.

There are six skills that children need to get ready to read:

**Letter Knowledge**
Your child needs to see letters. Point out letters around the house and talk about the sounds they make. M-m-m says mmm! Help your child learn the letters in their name. That is an important bridge to learning the alphabet.

**Sound Awareness**
Your child needs to hear sounds. A baby cooing is talking to you. Answer their sounds with real words. Nursery rhymes might not make sense, but they have fun sounds and rhythms that babies and toddlers love.

**Vocabulary**
Your child needs to learn words. The more words they hear, the larger their vocabulary. Children learn meaning from context: The blanket is soft; the soup is hot. The more you talk, sing, and read, the more words they learn, and the better they can communicate with you. Use rich and unusual words, such as swirl, zany, or whirligig.

**Print Motivation**
Your child can love books. Sharing books with you and having fun together is something your child will love. If they know books are fun, they will want to learn how to read when they start school.

**Print Awareness**
Your child needs to know how to use books. Let babies hold soft books, let them turn pages when they are older. They will learn that books start at the front page, and words go from the top of the page to the bottom.

**Narrative Skills**
Your child can tell stories. Ask your child questions while you read, such as “What do you think will happen? Will the turtle win the race?” When you come home from work, tell your baby what you did all day. When they get bigger, have them tell you what they did all day.