Encouraging a child to read allows them to enter a world of imagination. But once a child learns the art of storytelling, they learn the skill of self-expression. At the Los Angeles Times, we remain committed to serving the youngest learners in our community and encouraging them to explore new ideas through reading and writing.

Reading by 9, a program of the Los Angeles Times, aims to support youth and family literacy. Established in 1998, we continue our work to aid parents, guardians and educators to meet child literacy goals.

The Reading by 9 annual parent reading guide was developed in partnership with the Los Angeles Public Library, whose mission is to provide free and easy access to information, ideas, books and technology that enrich, educate and empower every individual in our city’s diverse communities.

Our 2022 guide includes a diversity of child authors and main characters in stories. The diverse book recommendations allow children to read and learn from the experiences of others. The guide is available in both English and Spanish, and offers resources to promote literacy as a routine in a child’s life.

As we look ahead, we aim to provide year-round opportunities for our community to engage with literacy. If you are interested in supporting our efforts, please consider making a tax-deductible donation to the Los Angeles Times Community Fund as we strive to expand literacy resources for families.

Monika Khare
Director, Public Affairs

Los Angeles Times
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Traditionally we think of writing as the process of thoughts being formed into words which make their way onto the page or screen via a writing utensil or keyboard. But what does writing look like for very young children?

At a library storytime that focuses on early literacy, you're likely to see scarves swirling through the air, forming the alphabet. Parents and/or caregivers will take their babies’ hands to trace out the letters on name tags, books, signs, or other printed material. There will be all kinds of fun movements and stretches as participants mimic letters with their bodies. Brightly colored felt pieces are available for families to talk about what letters have the same shape.

As babies become toddlers, more rhyming fingerplays can be heard from the storytime room. “The Itsy Bitsy Spider” is either a tickling hand on someone’s own arm or fingers alternating on top of one another as the spider crawls up the water spout. Whether chanted or sung along with hand movements, fingerplays build the motor skills for gripping future writing tools. And whether that tool happens to be a crayon, marker, or a piece of chalk, the resulting scribbles mark the first steps of writing and self expression.

From these initial building blocks, creativity and writing is further supported at the library by the books and resources that feature a diverse range of experiences. When children see characters that look like them in the pages of picture books or read narratives that find a way to magically mirror their inner thoughts, they become inspired and empowered to tell their own stories.

Library programs also give children access to authors, illustrators, and other storytellers. During the “Your Author Series,” available on Los Angeles Public Library’s YouTube channel, the subjects are almost always asked what advice they would give to youth who want to become authors. My personal favorite comes from Laurel Snyder, who wrote “Endlessly Ever After,” a pick-your-path fairy tale book illustrated by Dan Santat. She advised turning off devices and staring at the ceiling. After five distraction-free minutes of staring, write down a sentence. Do this every day and become a writer.

With all that the library does to support literacy by way of imagination and inspiration, the various contributors from Los Angeles Public Library are honored to once again participate in this year’s Reading by 9 to offer support, ideas and tips for children’s creative expression.

Joanna Fabicon
Senior Librarian for Children’s Services Los Angeles Public Library
By Kids, For Kids

In this year’s reading guide, Reading by 9 is spotlighting child authors to inspire the next generation of young storytellers. Here are three featured stories.
BOOK RECOMMENDATIONS

By Kids, For Kids

BABIES TO KINDERGARTEN

I Am Jazz 🏳️

From age 2, Jazz Jennings knew she was a girl. Since then, she has become a spokesperson for trans children everywhere. At age 13, Jazz published a children's book about her trans experience.

Jessica Herthel & Jazz Jennings

1ST TO 2ND GRADE

Heartsongs 🎵

Mattie J. T. Stepanek wrote poetry from age 3 until his death at 13. Some of his poems reflect his reality of living with a rare form of muscular dystrophy and the grief of the loss of his three siblings to the same condition. But most of his poetry reflects his hope, wisdom, and light-hearted spirit of childhood.

Mattie J. T. Stepanek

3RD TO 4TH GRADE

Marley Dias Gets It Done: And So Can You! 🎨

In 2015, Marley Dias founded the #1000BlackGirlBooks campaign to collect and donate books with Black girl protagonists. She published this book at age 14 to share her passion for making our world a better place. Throughout the book, Dias offers advice to children on how to become lifelong readers and achieve their dreams.

Marley Dias

Look out for more books written by kids throughout the guide with this icon. 🎨
Why I love to read and write

By Anthony Aguilar

I love reading because there’s always an interesting story in every book. There’s a book for everyone even when you don’t think so, you just have to find the right one. Another reason why I love reading is because whenever the main character expresses their feelings, it’s just like writing their life in one book. It’s like they are one with the book and write what they feel and then just write what they want to write.

I love writing because it expresses my feelings. Writing a story or a poem is like my whole life in one book. To become a writer you need to think: who are the characters? What’s the problem? And what is the story about? To tell stories you will need to focus and be brave. I always love to write whenever I’m feeling down or bored.

BIO

Anthony is 10 years old. He likes to play scary games and draw. His favorite color is blue and his favorite food is a sandwich.
BABIES TO KINDERGARTEN

**Alma and How She Got Her Name**

Alma learns about the family members she was named after. Inspired by their stories, she hopes to someday have her own legacy.

*Juana Martinez-Neal*

**Antiracist Baby**

This picture book teaches young readers the power of antiracism and offers nine steps to build a more equitable world.

*Ibram X. Kendi*

**I Am Odd, I Am New** 📝

At age 10, Benjamin writes that it’s a good thing to be odd and different. His poetry is about self-expression and what it’s like to live with autism.

*Benjamin Giroux*
BOOK RECOMMENDATIONS

BABIES TO KINDERGARTEN

Isabel and her Colores Go to School

On Isabel's first day of school, she learns a new way to communicate with friends. This vibrant picture book validates the experience of English language learners and teaches empathy to young readers.

Alexandra Alessandri

Raise Your Hand 🆙

When an 11-year-old realizes the boys in her class speak up more than the girls, she creates a Girl Scout patch to encourage young girls' confidence.

Alice Paul Tapper & Marta Kisser

Something About Grandma

On her first solo trip to her abuela's house in Mexico, Julia discovers there's something magical about her abuela and her enchanting home.

Tania de Regil

These books are made by kids.
Look what a book can do!

By Lauren Wagman
Executive Director, Ready, Set, Read!

Ready, Set, Read! provides books, resources, and support to Los Angeles families, helping them lay the foundation for their children's lifelong learning. We love supporting parents in using books to bolster children's healthy development, starting from birth. Beyond building knowledge and curiosity about the world, reading with your child has other benefits. These include:

Parent/child attachment: Children whose caregivers read to them daily enjoy warm, attentive bonding time with a cherished adult. They benefit from the predictability of this routine. While laying the foundation for future cognitive learning, regularly reading together reinforces children's sense of emotional security. This sets the stage for future social emotional growth.

Sensory exploration: When babies chew and throw books, they are doing important exploration. Infants use all five senses to learn: they love to look, touch, taste and feel books, exploring their colors, shapes, textures and weight. Hearing your voice share sounds and stories helps their own language development.

School readiness: Interacting with books builds children's early literacy skills. They discover how books work: turning pages; finding the top, bottom, front and back; and seeing text read from left to right. They learn that shapes form letters, letters make words and print has meaning. Hearing a variety of words improves children's vocabularies, preparing them for independent reading. Time spent reading aloud with children fosters a love of reading and readiness to succeed in school.

There's much more to share! Ready, Set, Read!’s parent workshops showcase how books can be a launchpad for limitless learning.
1ST TO 2ND GRADE

Sarai and the meaning of awesome

When a young girl’s grandparents are forced to move, she hatches a plan to buy their house back.

Saraí González and Monica Brown

The Coquíes Still Sing

A young girl feels at home when the coquí frogs sing to her from her family’s mango tree, but her home is forever changed when a hurricane strikes. This story about community is full of hope, inspired by the rebuilding of Puerto Rico following Hurricane Maria in 2017.

Karina Nicole González
1ST TO 2ND GRADE

Why Not You?

Whether it’s becoming a musician, a scientist or the president, why not you? This story encourages young readers to achieve their dreams, no matter how big they might seem.

Ciara and Russell Wilson

Lena Carls and The Power of Friendship

When Lena Carls moves, she becomes the new girl in a new city. She manages to make friends, but can she get them to like each other?

Enioluwanimi Solaru
When Mia’s abuela comes to live with her, they transcend a language barrier through love and patience.

Meg Medina

This poetic anthem for Black girls celebrates their power and selfhood.

Brynne Barnes and Tatyana Fazlalizadeh
Multicultural programming at the Los Angeles Public Library

By Kadie Seitz
Youth Services Librarian, Los Angeles Public Library

Are you interested in Incan music? Curious about Chinese paper art? Itching to practice your Italian? You might be surprised to learn that your public library offers free programs on these topics and hundreds of others every month, both in-person and online. The multicultural programming offered by the Los Angeles Public Library offers you the chance to celebrate both your own culture and experience some of the many other cultures that make Los Angeles such a special place.

Exposing children to different cultures from an early age is vital to raising well-rounded and confident young people. Even as early as infancy, children are starting to observe others, and by two years of age may start to comment on the difference they see between other people and themselves. The way that caregivers respond to these differences helps children to shape their own perceptions of those different from themselves — that, for example, “different” does not equal “bad.”

The multicultural programming offered by the library gives little ones ample opportunities to experience new things and allows caregivers to practice positive, healthy responses to differences. So whether it’s bilingual storytime, a drum circle, a new craft or a chance to taste something new, the library’s multicultural programming has you covered!
A poem by Juan Felipe Herrera encourages readers to imagine what they might be when they grow up.

Juan Felipe Herrera

Imagine

¡Mambo Mucho Mambo! The Dance That Crossed Color Lines

In 1940s New York City, the newly desegregated Palladium Ballroom blends genres of mambo and Latin jazz.

Dean Robbins
3RD TO 4TH GRADE

Survival Guide for Kids with Autism Spectrum Disorder (And their parents)

This book includes stories from real children and offers strategies for communicating, making friends and succeeding in school.

Elizabeth Verdick and Elizabeth Reeve, M.D.

This can’t be happening at Macdonald Hall!

In a boy’s boarding school, Bruno and Boots are always in trouble. After being separated by the headmaster, they do everything they can to get their room back.

Gordon Korman
3RD TO 4TH GRADE

Brave. Black. First.

This biographical compilation includes more than 50 extraordinary African American women such as Harriet Tubman and Serena Williams. Discover the remarkable women who paved the way for the next generation of changemakers.

Cheryl Hudson

The Other Half of Happy

Quijana learns what it means to belong as she discovers which parts of herself come together to make her whole.

Rebecca Balcarcel
Treasure Your Time Together

By Madeline Gillette
Librarian, Los Angeles Public Library

The number one way to promote early literacy in children is to spend time talking, learning and playing together. Here’s five (free!) things you can do with your child using your LAPL library card.

1. **Explore Los Angeles with Discover and Go**
   a. https://lapl.discoverandgo.net/
   b. Get free and discounted passes to exciting destinations around L.A, including the L.A. Zoo and the La Brea Tar Pits and Museum! Going to new places sparks creativity and a lifetime love for learning.

2. **Have a dance party with Freegal Music**
   a. https://lapl.freegalmusic.com/
   b. Even if you only have a few minutes, you can get your bodies moving and have a dance party with playlists like “Children’s Chart-Toppers.” Listening to music helps little ones learn to decipher words and leads to literacy skills.

3. **Learn a new language together with Mango and Little Pim**
   b. Learning a new language is a great skill for both kids and adults, and Mango’s new Little Pim content helps introduce a new language using children’s natural love of play.

4. **Become a budding scientist with Neighborhood Science kits**
   a. https://lapl.org/neisci/kits
   b. Over 20 LAPL branches have Neighborhood Science kits available for checkout! Kids will learn about the natural world around them and discover how they can help professional scientists by doing science in their own neighborhood.

5. **Read something new with LAPL’s Book Bundles to Go**
   b. Let the library surprise you with five new books to read! Indicate your child’s age and interests and the library will pick out a bundle of books for you to read together.
Resources

There are many organizations across Los Angeles and Orange counties through which families can access literacy resources and support services. Take a look at these organizations.

LITERACY PROGRAMS

826LA
1714 W. Sunset Blvd.
Los Angeles, CA 90026
(213) 413-3388
826la.org

Access Books
(310) 284-3452
accessbooks.net

Common Sense Media
1100 Glendon Ave. 17th Floor
Los Angeles, CA 90024
commonsense.org

CSUN L.A. Times Literacy Center
18111 Nordhoff St.
Northridge, CA 91330
(818) 677-7394
bit.ly/2Ym5IDh

News Literacy Project
(714) 479-0294
newslit.org

Parentis Foundation
24012 Calle de la Plata, Suite 400
Laguna Hills, CA 92653
(949) 305-2716
parentisfoundation.org

Reading Is Fundamental
7250 Bandini Blvd., Suite 209
Commerce, CA 90040
(323) 890-0876
rifocal.org

Reading Partners
5350 Wilshire Blvd., #36216
Los Angeles, CA 90036
(213) 399-8599
bit.ly/3mXQuQi

Reading to Kids
1600 Sawtelle Boulevard, Suite 210
Los Angeles, California 90025
(310) 479-7455
readingtokids.org

Read to a Child
10940 Wilshire Blvd., Suite 100
Los Angeles, CA 90024
(310) 208-5300
readtoachild.org/los-angeles

Ready, Set, Read!
1000 N. Alameda St., No. 240
Los Angeles, CA 90012
(818) 570-2838
readysetread.org

The Book Foundation
5429 W. Washington Blvd.
Los Angeles, CA 90016
(323) 746-5800
thebookfoundation.org

SUPPORT SERVICES

Abriendo Puertas/Opening Doors
1000 N. Alameda St., No. 240
Los Angeles, CA 90012
(213) 346-3216
ap-od.org

Allies for Every Child
12120 Wagner St.
Culver City, CA 90230
(310) 397-4200
alliesforeverychild.org

Families Forward Learning Center
980 N. Fair Oaks Ave.
Pasadena, CA 91103
(626) 792-2687
familiesforwardlc.org

Hands Together
201 Civic Center Drive
Santa Ana, CA 92701
(714) 479-0294
handstogether-sa.org

Koreatown Youth and Community Center
3727 W. 6th St., No. 300
Los Angeles, CA 90020
(213) 365-7400
kyccla.org

Mar Vista Family Center Preschool
5075 S. Slauson Ave.
Culver City, CA 90230
(310) 390-9607
marvistafc.org

Mexican American Opportunity Foundation
6113 Clara St.
Bell Gardens, CA 90201
(562) 928-1357
maof.org

Pathways LA
3325 Wilshire Blvd., Suite 1100
Los Angeles, CA 90010
(213) 427-2700
pathwaysla.org

Proyecto Pastoral Centro de Alegría
420 N. Soto St.
Los Angeles, CA 90033
(323) 685-8501
proyectopastoral.org

South Central LAMP
892 E. 48th St.
Los Angeles, CA 90011
(323) 234-1471
facebook.com/Southcentrallamp

LIBRARIES

Los Angeles Public Library
72 branches throughout the city
(213) 228-7000
lapl.org/branches

Los Angeles County Library
86 branches throughout the county
(323) 264-7715
lacountylibrary.org/library-locator

Orange County Public Libraries
33 branches throughout the county
(714) 566-3000
http://ocpl.org/libraries