

# Bonding While Learning: a new book by America Learns

reviewed by Go Baby



For some new moms, breastfeeding, diaper changes, and anticipating the needs of a newborn is the easy part. New babies eat, sleep, poop: though it isn't always simple, it is fairly straightforward. Often these moms find the hard part comes when the child gets older, when they have to address not only the child's physical needs, but also his or her cognitive and emotional needs as well. How does one foster a child's natural curiosity while instilling a love of learning and early literacy? *Bonding While Learning*, just published by America Learns, attempts to answer these questions.

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Written by two educators and aimed at parents of 3-6 year-olds, *Bonding While Learning* contains activities designed to, "help [parents] spend meaningful, quality time with [their] child[ren] that not only builds [their] relationship but also supports [their] child's early literacy growth." The book has dozens of activities that can be used for many years as the child develops and improves his or her skills. The book begins with suggestions of ways to keep your child's attention during story time, moving through more advanced reading comprehension and eventually letter and word recognition that in turn leads to writing. The book attempts to help parents use every-day moments and household items to continually encourage preschoolers to become familiar with letters and words. These activities serve as bonding time between the mother and child, and are particularly useful if you're not an expert educator.

For example, an activity called "The Talking Bag" has been designed to, "help your child demonstrate his or her understanding of a story in a fun, interactive way." The steps are simple: select a book you recently read to your child, create or find substitutions for important items in the story (it suggests that you trace illustrations from the book, or use magazine photos or even plastic figurines), put them in the bag, and then have the child take items out one by one and either retell the whole story or recreate certain scenes. This activity also addresses the natural frustration parents experience from reading the same story over and over again by bringing a new life to the story. Each of the 50+ activities has a corresponding page in the 2nd half of the book with black and white illustrations and templates that may be copied or cut-out and used.

For a child who is more interested in climbing on the furniture than practicing letters or sitting with a book, there are movement-based exercises that come in handy. For example, the "Alphabet Fish and Sharks" game (drawings of fish with letters printed on them are included in the book) would be really fun for a child who needs to get his or her whole body involved in an activity. For this game, the parent is instructed to tape 6-8 fish letters to the floor. The parent and child will then pretend to swim around the area, and when the parent calls out "shark" the child is to step on a letter and call out its name. If the child is correct, he or she is "safe" and play continues.

This book is sure to become very useful in the daily lives of families with new readers and is a fun and educational alternative to DVD's or TV. The book is filled with creative, interesting new activities that challenge while reinforcing what a child already knows. The best thing about *Bonding While Learning* is that it arms parents with the tools they need to make educational time interactive and fun -- at home, in the park or on-the-go.