

The Daily Parent

A NEWSLETTER FOR WORKING PARENTS

EARLY LITERACY A Family Matter

For want of a nail the shoe was lost.

For want of a shoe the horse was lost.

For want of a horse the rider was lost.

For want of a rider the battle was lost.

For want of a battle the kingdom was lost.

And all for the want of a horseshoe nail.

Likewise, children who don't have early literacy skills do not learn well in kindergarten. Children who do not do well in kindergarten are less likely to read well in third grade. Children who cannot read well in third grade are less likely to graduate from high school. Children who don't graduate from high school earn less money and are more likely to spend time in prison.

All for the want of early literacy skills.



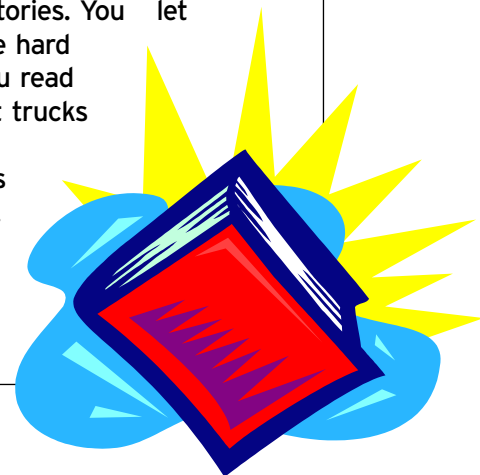
Early literacy is what children know about reading and writing before they can actually read or write. Literacy is about connecting spoken language to written words. Today, less than one-third of all third graders can read well enough to learn from reading they do in school.

You're Already Promoting Early Literacy

You and your family are probably already doing many of the things that will help your child with early literacy, reading, and writing. You talk with a high-pitched voice to infants. You count toes. You sing lullabies and tell nursery rhymes. You listen to the sounds of dogs barking. You imitate animal sounds. You name people, animals, and objects that you see everyday. You tell stories. You let your toddler explore hard page books, and you read picture books about trucks and Cinderella and animals and families to your preschooler. You celebrate your child's sense of rhythm and ability to dance. You play

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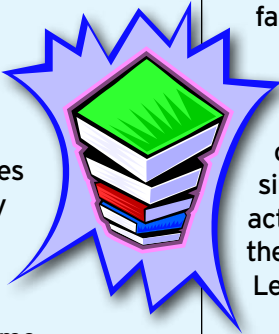
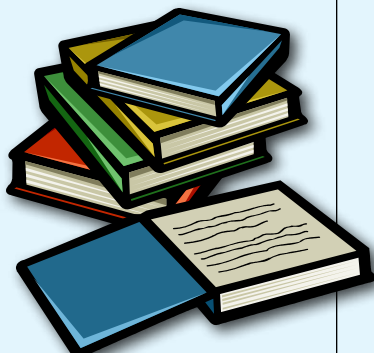
with play dough, and you give your child crayons, markers, and paper. You print your child's name on his or her art work. You encourage your child to keep trying when he or she is learning new things that are hard to do.

All these daily activities will help your child be ready for kindergarten and be able to read by third grade. You can involve the whole family in helping make these activities fun and part of your everyday routine. Your child can also learn early literacy skills in a high-quality child care center or family child care home where caregivers use a curriculum based on play and teacher-directed activities to encourage early literacy.

What We Know About Early Literacy Development

With federal funds from the National Institute for Literacy, the National Early Literacy Panel recently examined research about how young children develop skills to become successful readers and writers. The panel found the following skills are important:

- ▶ alphabet knowledge,
- ▶ concepts about print,
- ▶ phonological awareness,
- ▶ oral language,
- ▶ writing name/writing, and
- ▶ rapid naming of objects and colors or rapid naming of letters and numbers.



How You Can Do More To Encourage Your Child's Early Literacy Development

Make language fun. Have the whole family help. Your child will be motivated to learn reading and writing skills from you and from the people who have a good relationship with your child. After your child is successful with simpler skills, add new and more complex activities. The following activities support the findings from the National Early Learning Panel:

Alphabetic knowledge

What it is: Recognizing upper and lower case letters, knowing the names of letters, knowing the sounds that go with letters, being able to print letters.

How to encourage it:

- ▶ Sing alphabet songs.
- ▶ Read alphabet books.
- ▶ Say the letters of your child's name as you print the letters.
- ▶ Help your child find the letters on signs, in books, and on the keyboard. Print the letters.
- ▶ Repeat letter sounds. "M" goes MMMM. "B" goes BBBB.
- ▶ Play with letters. Use magnetic letters with your preschooler and make simple words on the refrigerator. Play with alphabet blocks and alphabet puzzles.
- ▶ Draw letters in the sand. Trace letters on sand paper. Make letters with play dough.
- ▶ Play with same and different sounds (phone ring tones, 2 claps and 3 claps) and pictures (horse, pig, bird, and barn). Later on, this will help your child tell the difference between p, d, b, and q.



- ▶ Play language games that match letters to letters and letters to sounds.
- ▶ Encourage drawing and writing in daily activities.

Concepts about print

What it is: Knowing about the printed word and how printed language works.

How to encourage it:

- ▶ Allow your child to explore books by having plenty of books around.
- ▶ Talk about books. There is a front and back, an author and an illustrator. We read English from left to right and from top to bottom. Words are made of letters. There are spaces between words. We use upper and lower case letters and punctuation. The picture gives cues about the story.
- ▶ Point out reading and writing in daily life. You read menus, traffic signs, calendars, notes to family, shopping lists, cereal boxes, and TV schedules. You read and write email, letters, memos, and lists.
- ▶ Write down a story as your child dictates it to you.

Phonological awareness

What it is: Identifying the different sounds that make words and connecting these sounds with written words.

How to encourage it:

- ▶ Recite nursery rhymes. Leave out the last word and have your child say the word.
- ▶ Have someone whisper from different parts of the room and ask your child where the sound is coming from.
- ▶ Make up silly rhymes by changing the first letter of a word - soda, poda, coda, roda.
- ▶ Read stories with rhymes or different sounds.
- ▶ Have your child identify what's missing from a collection - first with objects, then with colors, then letters, then words and numbers.

Oral language

What it is: Listening and talking - your child can understand what you say, and you and other people can understand your child. It includes knowing the names of things.



How to encourage it:

- ▶ Talk with your child throughout the day. Describe what you are doing. Take turns talking, even with your infant. Add information: "Yes, that's a big, black dog."
- ▶ Use rhymes, songs, and music to help your child enjoy the sounds of language.
- ▶ Tell your own stories. Listen to your child tell a story. Have your child retell a story.
- ▶ Read. Read. Read. It's not too early to start at birth. Snuggle together and read aloud. Find books that interest your child. Talk about the story. Ask questions. Explain the words and use those words throughout the day. Have a book ready to read during times when you have to wait.
- ▶ Share the reading of the book. Ask your child what is happening. Give feedback: "Yes, it looks like a snake, but it's a caterpillar." Add information: "Caterpillars eat leaves." Ask your child to talk about pictures and ideas in the book and what might happen next. Find letters and words in the book.

Writing name/writing

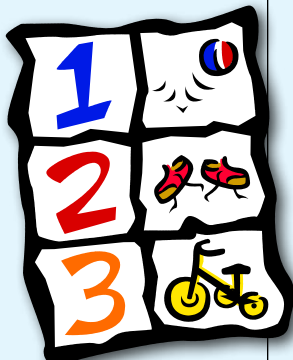
What it is: Printing names and using print to communicate.

How to encourage it:

- ▶ Encourage writing. Make paper, markers, crayons, chalk, and fingerpaints available for drawing and writing.
- ▶ Help your child recognize his or her name. Have your child find individual letters in his or her name in other words.
- ▶ Help your child print his or her name.

Rapid automatic naming

What it is: Rapid naming of objects, color, letters, and numbers.



How to encourage it:

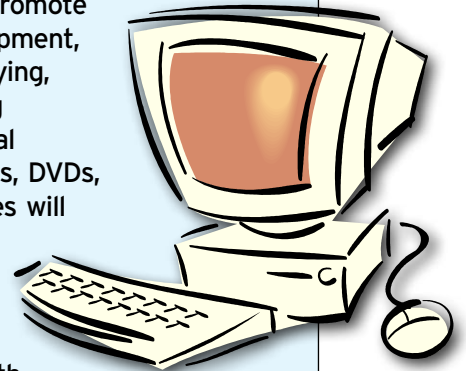
- ▶ Prepare cards with pictures of animals, people, toys, and colors. Ask your child to name the picture on the cards. Repeat the game until your child can quickly name the pictures.
- ▶ Show your child a deck of playing cards or a stack of cards with letters. Ask your child to name numbers and letters. Repeat the game until your child can quickly name the numbers and letters.

Using TV, Videos, DVDs, And Computers To Help With Early Literacy

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) discourages television viewing for children younger than 2 years old.

AAP encourages more interactive activities that will promote proper brain development, such as talking, playing, singing, and reading together. Educational programming, videos, DVDs, and computer games will help your child's early literacy development

ONLY if you are actively involved with your child while he or she is in front of the screen.



For More Information

- ▶ **Your Local Library** offers a wealth of material on how to choose books that will interest your child and encourage early literacy development.
- ▶ **International Reading Association-Reading Resources**, www.reading.org/resources/index.html, has teaching tools and materials for parents and teachers.

Early Literacy

- ▶ **National Institute for Literacy-Early Childhood**, www.nifl.gov/nifl/early_childhood.html, finds scientifically-based research about how young children develop skills that will make them successful readers and makes it available in publications for parents, families, and caregivers.
- ▶ **Reach Out and Read**, www.reachoutandread.org, provides a guide for parents about developmental milestones of early literacy for children 6 months to 5 years, tips on reading and choosing books, a list of recommended books, and links to other websites.
- ▶ **Reading is Fundamental**, www.rif.org/parents, has resources for parents to help motivate their children's reading by age groups.
- ▶ **Reading Rockets**, <http://readingrockets.org/>, is national multimedia project offering information and resources on how young kids learn to read, why so many struggle, and how caring adults can help.



- ▶ **Sesame workshop**, www.sesameworkshop.org, has activities for parents to do with their children that are arranged by activity type, children's age, and learning areas.

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