



EARLY CHILDHOOD

Literacy

Early Literacy Skills, Behaviors and Importance

Early Literacy

DO YOU KNOW THE
EARLY LITERACY SKILLS

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DID YOU KNOW...

- » The building blocks of language and literacy form in the first three years of a child's life. In their first year, a child's brain doubles in size.
- » By age 3, a child's brain is twice as active as an adult's.
- » A baby's job is to learn.
- » Brain connections form through the 5 senses – sight, sound, touch, taste and smell
- » The more activities a child experiences from warm, responsive care-givers, the more connections that child's brain forms.
- » Early childhood experiences determine how a child's brain will develop.
- » Simple things like holding your child, talking and singing with the child and reading to the child will form these brain connections.



EARLY LITERACY SKILLS

1. Knowing the names of things
2. Being interested in and enjoying books
3. Noticing letters and words, knowing how to handle a book, knowing how to follow words on a page
4. Being able to describe things and events and tell a story
5. Knowing that letters have names and sound different from each other
6. Hearing and playing with the smaller sounds in words, like cat, bat, hat

Why early literacy skills are important

Developing these skills makes it easier for children to learn to read in school.

Reading is an essential skill to success in school.

Children who enter school with these skills have an advantage.

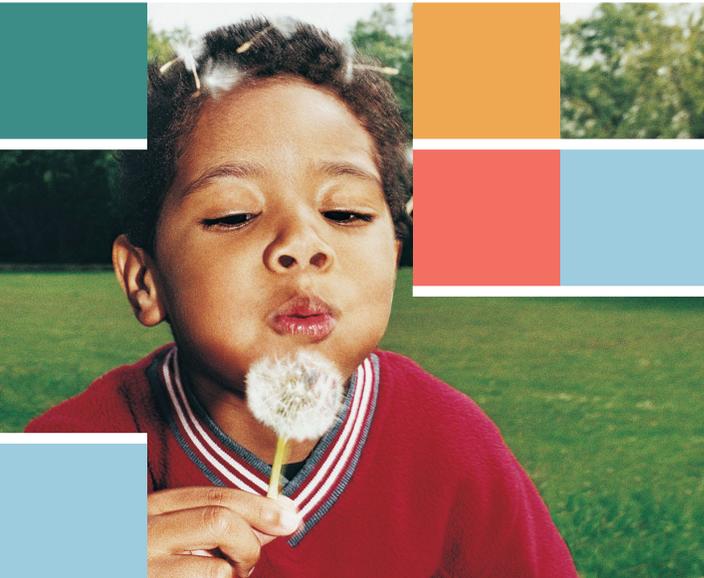
This advantage carries with them throughout their school years.

EARLY LITERACY BEHAVIORS

1. Book handling- turning pages, mouthing or chewing books
2. Looking and recognizing – paying attention to pictures, pointing, laughing
3. Picture and story comprehension – imitating actions or talking about the story
4. Story reading – pretending to read or following the words with their fingers

PARENTS, GRANDPARENTS, CARE-GIVERS

You are your child's first teacher. You know your child best and can help them learn in ways and at times that are best for him or her. You are their role model – they will follow your lead. Children learn best by doing and they love doing what you do and doing things with you.



FIVE EASY WAYS

to help your child develop literacy skills - Talk, Sing, Read, Write, Play

TALK

- ◇ Have two way conversations with your children - children learn language by listening.
- ◇ Respond to what they say and add words to stretch their vocabulary.
- ◇ If English isn't your first language, speak to your children in the language you know best.
- ◇ Talk while you prepare meals, do chores, get ready for bed, go to work and school in the morning.

- ◇ Speak slowly to young children and enunciate - this helps their brains identify sounds.
- ◇ Repeat words to strengthen the brain pathways used for language.
- ◇ Speak face-to-face when talking to infants - they can match shapes to sounds.
- ◇ Don't talk baby talk - the more complex sentences a child hears the more complex sentences they'll be able to speak.
- ◇ Limit television time.

READ

- ◇ Reading together is the most important way to help children get ready to read. It increases vocabulary and general knowledge and it helps children understand how print works and how books are put together. Children who enjoy being read to are more likely to enjoy reading themselves.



ENCOURAGE CREATIVE PLAY

- ◇ Read every day.
- ◇ Make reading interactive. Look at the cover and try to guess what the book is about before you begin. Ask the child questions as you read and listen to the answers.
- ◇ Use books to teach new words. As you read, talk about what these words mean.
- ◇ Have books within easy reach or in a special spot in the house.

FIVE EASY WAYS CONTINUED

WRITE

- ◇ Encourage scribbling by providing many opportunities to write and draw. Keep crayons and paper on a table where children can return again and again.
- ◇ Get magnetic letters for the refrigerator or make letters from cardboard or paper for the children to play with.
- ◇ Have them sign their drawings to develop hand-eye coordination and build up their writing muscles. Children also begin to understand that writing represents words.

◇ Talk about what they draw. Have them make up stores or write captions for their drawings so they make the connection between written and spoken language.

SING

- ◇ Sing the alphabet song so the child learns the letters
- ◇ Sing nursery rhymes so children hear the different sounds in words.
- ◇ Clap along to the rhythm so children hear the syllables.

◇ Play music designed for children.

Play helps children think symbolically so give them plenty of unstructured playtimes.

PLAY

- ◇ Play helps children think symbolically so give them plenty of unstructured playtimes.
- ◇ Encourage dramatic play with puppets or stuffed animals. Making up stories this way

develops narrative skills so children understand that stories have a beginning, middle and end.

- ◇ Have the child tell you a story based on the pictures in a book or ask the child to 'read' you a book that you've read together many times. This develops vocabulary.



Ideas for Specific Age Groups: Babies, Toddlers, Preschoolers

BABIES

Babies understand language long before they are able to talk. Talk to your baby often about what he or she is seeing, hearing, feeling and doing.

Babies like books with:

- Pictures of babies
- Clear, bold pictures of familiar items
- Rhythm and repetition
- Textures – touch and feel books
- Animal sounds
- Lullaby books

TODDLERS

The main job of a toddler is exploring. Make the activity interactive by asking questions or encouraging the child to repeat familiar phrases.

Toddlers like books:

- That fit into their hands
- With simple rhymes

- About familiar items or routines - shoes, toys, pets, bedtime, bath time
- With flaps that lift or tabs that pull so they can explore
- With few words or with repeating words that they can learn by heart
- Bedtime books

PRESCHOOLERS

Preschool children are almost ready to read. Point out letters in the book or run your finger below the text as you read.

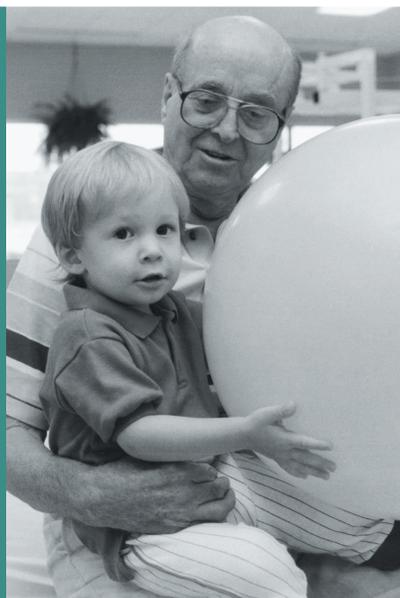
Preschoolers like books:

- That tell stories
- With funny stories
- With simple text they can memorize
- About kids – similar or different
- About going to school and making friends
- With playful or rhyming language
- Alphabet, counting and vocabulary books,
- Books about the real world like trucks.



RESOURCES

- **Birth to Six** - Multnomah County Library, Oregon's Early Literacy Program with reading lists for babies, toddlers and preschoolers. www.multcolib.org/birthtosix/
- **Zero to Five** - a national, nonprofit organization that informs, trains, and supports professionals, policymakers, and parents in their efforts to improve the lives of infants and toddlers. www.zerotothree.org/
- **The National Center for Family Literacy** supports family literacy services and has many online resources for families. www.familit.org/free-resources/family-resources/
- **Reading is Fundamental** - the oldest literacy group in the US. Look here for advice, booklists, tips and activities. www.rif.org/
- **Reading Rockets** - strategies, lessons and activities to help young children learn to read. www.readingrockets.org/



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