

Tips for Families:

How To Build Language and Reading Skills at Home

Your child is always listening, watching, and learning from you! Babies learn language when they hear lots of words from a caregiver. This helps them learn to read once they start school.

Starting from birth, talk, sing, and share books and stories with your child.

AGE RANGE 0-2

Talk all day long

WHY?

Talking to your little ones helps them learn about the world and builds their vocabulary. Children who hear lots of words learn skills that prepare them for reading.

TRY THIS:

Respond to your baby's sounds and smiles. Imitate the noises they make and add new words as they start to babble. If they say "Wa-," you might reply, "Yes, water! You're drinking water."



Encourage marks and scribbles

WHY?

Making marks and scribbles helps children build the fine motor skills and hand-eye coordination needed to form letters. It also helps little ones understand that their marks and drawings can represent ideas, an important step toward writing and spelling.

TRY THIS:

Give babies grasping toys like textured balls or teething rings to strengthen the small muscles in their hands, helping prepare them for future writing. Offer safe, easy-to-grip materials like large crayons and washable markers so that your baby can explore making marks. Celebrate every mark they make!



Sing and rhyme together

WHY?

Rhyming songs usually repeat the same words and rhythms. This helps babies and children recognize different sounds.

TRY THIS:

Sing rhyming songs and clap or bounce to the beat. When reading a rhyme, pause and let your child fill in missing words: "Twinkle, twinkle, little... ___?" Any sound they make counts!



Follow your child's lead

WHY?

Children learn best when they're interested.

TRY THIS:

Notice what catches your baby's attention. Describe what they're looking at: "You see the puppy! The puppy is running fast." Read books they like, even for just a few pages. Talking about the pictures counts!



Point out print

WHY?

Children need to learn that the words we say are the same as the words we see in books and around us. Print carries meaning and appears everywhere!

TRY THIS:

Draw your child's attention to the pictures and written words in books. For example, you can say, "Do you see the bird on the page? It's blue!" Show children where print appears in everyday life — such as on signs, labels, logos, and packaging — and discuss what it says.



For more information on early literacy and language development, please visit the Canadian Children's Literacy Foundation at www.childrensliteracy.ca



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**EARLY
WORDS**
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AGE RANGE: 3-5

Introduce your child to new vocabulary and expand on their ideas

WHY?

Children's language skills and knowledge impact their reading and writing abilities. Readers need to be able to both read the words and understand their meaning.

TRY THIS:

Use new and unfamiliar words when talking. For example, instead of saying "happy," you can say "delighted."

Try creating sentences with your child using these new words. This helps children learn the meanings of the words!

Expand on your child's comments or questions. For example, if your child says "Dog!" you can answer with "Yes, that is a dog.

Who else do we know that has a dog?"



Notice print everywhere

WHY?

We want children to understand that the words we say are the same as the words we see in books and around us.

TRY THIS:

Point out words in books and in everyday life (like signs on the street or at the park). For example, you can say, "That sign says 'STOP.' It starts with an S. It makes the first sound in the word 'ssss-stop!'"

Connect letters to sounds

WHY?

By teaching your child that letters also make sounds, you are laying the foundation for your child's ability to read.

TRY THIS:

Talk about the letters in their name: "The B in Bobby makes the /b/ sound."

Play games finding words that start with the same sound (like "pig," "puppy," and "papa").



Make writing fun

WHY?

At this age, children move beyond scribbles and start using writing to share ideas.

Practicing writing letters, words, and simple sentences builds hand strength, letter-sound knowledge, and the understanding that writing can communicate ideas.

TRY THIS:

Provide crayons, markers, paper, or other materials so children can explore drawing and writing.

Offer different opportunities to practice letters, words, and simple sentences. For example, children can create menus when playing restaurant, fill out checklists when playing doctor, or write invitations for classroom activities.

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