



Fun Early Literacy Activities for Little Ones

Newborns to 5+



Canadian
Children's
Literacy
Foundation

Fondation pour
l'alphabétisation
des enfants
canadiens

Welcome to the Early Words/Premiers mots program! Early Words is a Canadian Children's Literacy Foundation program that helps babies and young children get started on the road to reading. It provides information, training, and resources to professionals who work with families with young children, to make it easier for them to build early literacy skills at home.

The goal is to inspire families to start young children on a joyful reading journey by surrounding them with words right from birth.

Did you know?

The more words your little one hears from you, the better it is for their growing brain.

Talk together! Read and make up stories! Sing lots of songs! Start when they are very little and keep it going. It's fun and helps them get ready for reading.

By helping families receive the information and support they need, Early Words hopes families can incorporate literacy fun into children's routines, setting them on the pathway to reaching their full potential.

What is in the booklet?

In this booklet you'll find songs, games, and talk-time activities. Each activity also has a picture card.

Who is each activity for?
Look beside each activity.
It'll tell you.

BABY 0 to 12 months

TODDLER 12 months to 3 years

CHILD 3 years to 5 years

You know your child best.
Pick what's right for you and have fun!

TIP

Pull the picture cards out of this booklet. Keep them safe together in a container or sandwich bag.



Tips and Resources

Looking for more ways to help grow your little one's early literacy skills?



Scan this QR code in your phone's camera app to access more information and resources!

<https://childrensliteracy.ca/Tips-Resources>

SONG

Itsy Bitsy Spider

BABY
TODDLER
CHILD



The itsy bitsy spider climbed
up the waterspout.

(put your fingertips together like a spider and walk them up into the air)

Down came the rain
and washed the spider out.

(wiggle your fingers, bring them down and spread your hands apart in different directions at the bottom)

Out came the sun
and dried up all the rain.

(put both hands together, thumbs and pointer fingers touch, to make a circle and reach up high)

And the itsy, bitsy spider
climbed up the spout again.

(make your hands into a spider again and walk them up)

Try changing the “itsy bitsy spider” to the “great big hairy spider” (use a big, deep voice, clap your hands together as it goes up and do big actions) or the “teeny weeny spider” (use a tiny voice, a little spider and small actions).

TRY THIS

Give your child the spider card and have them move it along with the song.



GAME

Searching for Creatures

BABY
TODDLER
CHILD



Talk about the many different insects, birds and animals that may be in your neighbourhood.

When you are out with your child, decide together what to look for along the way. It might be insects, squirrels, dogs, birds – whatever your child is interested in.

When you find creatures, talk about what you see and what they look like.

You can extend this activity by drawing pictures of what you saw.



SONG

Shining Sun

BABY
TODDLER
CHILD 

Oh shining sun, sun,
shining golden sun,
please shine down on me.

Oh shining sun, sun,
shining golden sun,
hiding behind the tree.

This little (child's name) is asking you,
to please come out so we can play with you.

Oh shining sun, sun,
shining golden sun,
please shine down on,
please shine down on,
please shine down on,
me.

TRY THIS

Pretend you are
singing to the
sun card.



TALK TIME
Weather

BABY
TODDLER
CHILD 

Talk to your child about the weather.

Describe the weather. What would you wear outside?
What could you do outside?

For example:



“It is snowing and cold. We need our jacket, mittens and hat. We can build a snowman.”

“I can hear the rain outside. Let’s find the umbrella.”



“It is warm and sunny today. Let’s wear shorts.”

SONG
BINGO

BABY
TODDLER
CHILD 

There was a person who had a dog,
and Bingo was their name-o.

B-I-N-G-O

B-I-N-G-O

B-I-N-G-O

and Bingo was their name-o.

There was a person who had a dog,
and Bingo was their name-o.

B-I-N-G-O

B-I-N-G-O

(clap)-I-N-G-O

and Bingo was their name-o.

There was a person who had a dog,
and Bingo was their name-o.

B-I-N-G-O

B-I-N-G-O

(clap)-(clap)-N-G-O

and Bingo was their name-o.

(Continue the song until you clap
out all letters of B-I-N-G-O.)

TRY THIS

Replace B-I-N-G-O
with your child's name
and sing again!



TALK TIME

Pets

TODDLER
CHILD 

Talk to your child about pets you had as a child, currently have or would (or wouldn't) want to have.

Describe what the pet looks like and what you do with them. Talk about what they eat and how they make you feel. If your child is able to respond, ask them to share their thoughts as well.

For example:

“I always wanted to have a cute white bunny. I would feed my bunny carrots and snuggle with them.”



“When I was little we had a dog name Rocky. Rocky was brown and white. I loved chasing my dog outside.”



SONG

Head and Shoulders, Knees and Toes

BABY
TODDLER
CHILD



Touch each body part as you sing:

Head and shoulders, knees and toes,
knees and toes, knees and toes.

Head and shoulders, knees and toes,
eyes, ears, mouth and nose.



TALK TIME

Body Parts

BABY
TODDLER
CHILD



Name and touch your baby's body parts during various routines. You may also wish to describe what the purpose of each body part is.

For example, "Here are your eyes. We see with our eyes."



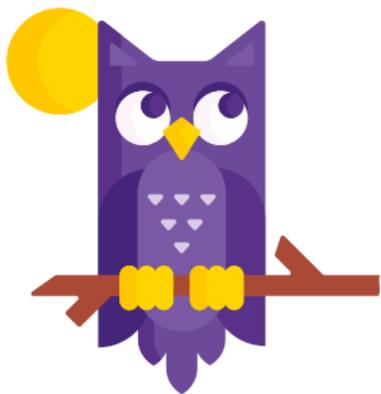
SONG

Peek-a-boo

BABY ★

Touch your baby's body parts and sing:

**Touch your ears,
pat your nose,
tickle baby's little toes!
Hide your eyes... where are you?
Baby's playing peek-a-boo!**



GAME

Peek-a-boo

BABY ★

Hold your hands in front of your face and ask your baby "Where am I?"

As you open your hands, say "Peek-a-boo! Here I am!"

At first your baby will be surprised to see you. Later on they will know what to expect and will get even more excited by the game. It's all about eye contact – your baby loves to see you and know that you are looking at them.



TRY THIS

Point out all the body parts on our light bulb friend card.

TALK TIME

Talk About Time During Routines

BABY
TODDLER
CHILD



Talk about the time before, during or after completing everyday activities. This can be done in many ways.

For example:

“It’s 8:00 in the morning. Time to get up.”

“We are going to the park this afternoon.”

“Lee should be home in 10 minutes!”

“We saw Grandma in the morning.”

“At 3:30 in the afternoon, we will pick up your sister.”

Your little ones are not expected to learn to tell time at this age. Hearing words relating to time, even for babies, will help them become familiar with the concept in the future.



GAME

What Time Is It Big Wolf?

Before the game, tell your child that when the wolf says “the time is”, it’s like reading it on a clock.

1. Decide which player is going to be the wolf.
2. The other player(s) line up in front of the wolf.
Leave lots of space between the players and wolf.
3. The wolf turns around with their back to the player(s) and asks: “What time is it big wolf?”
4. The wolf picks a time and the players have to take that many steps (e.g. 2 o’clock is 2 steps).
5. This repeats until the wolf thinks (without looking) the players are close enough to catch and yells “lunchtime.” Feel free to change this to whatever meal is appropriate. For example, if it’s 5:00 p.m. then yell “dinnertime.”
6. The wolf chases the players and tries to catch them.
Roles can be switched during the next game.

* To start, the adult should be the wolf so the child sees how the game is played.



TRY THIS

Talk about the numbers you see on the clock card.

SONG

Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star

BABY
TODDLER
CHILD



Twinkle, twinkle little star,
how I wonder what you are.

(wiggle your fingers)

(shrug your shoulders)

Up above the world so high,
like a diamond in the sky.

(raise arms over head)

(make a shape of a diamond with your fingers)

Twinkle, twinkle little star,
how I wonder what you are.

(put your hands in the air and wiggle your fingers)

(shrug your shoulders)

SONG

Zoom, Zoom, Zoom, Going to the Moon

BABY
TODDLER
CHILD



Zoom, zoom, zoom,
we're going to the moon.

(rub hands together, back and forth while pointing them up in the air)

Zoom, zoom, zoom,
we're going to the moon.

If you want to take a trip,
climb aboard my rocket ship.

Zoom, zoom, zoom,
we're going to the moon.



5, 4, 3, 2, 1.
Blast off!

(hold 5 fingers up and count down)

(lift child up gently)

TALK TIME

Make Up a Space Adventure

TODDLER 
CHILD

Make up a story about going on a space adventure.
You can talk about:

How you would get there

Who you would go with

What you would take with you

What you would see

When you would go



The possibilities are endless. If your child is talking, ask them to share their ideas as well. Use your imagination!



TRY THIS

Show your child the space card to help them make up their own space story.



Now use all the cards together for more fun activities!

BABY
TODDLER
CHILD



TALK TIME

Card Descriptions

Describe the images on the cards in any way you want!
You may choose to talk about:

WHAT the picture looks like
(shapes, colours, features, etc.)

WHERE you find it

WHO uses it

HOW it is used, made or makes you feel



For example:

Spider card: That's a big black spider. Here are their eyes and legs. How many legs can we count? They live outside in their web. Our dog doesn't like spiders!

TALK TIME

Personal Memory

TODDLER
CHILD



Choose a card and share a memory related to the picture. Talk about what happened and how you felt. If your child is able, ask them to share a memory of their own.

For example:

Sun card: When I was little, I used to play a game called "Catch the Shadow" in the sun. Aunty and I would chase each other. We stomped on each other's shadows. It was so fun! I felt happy.



Matching Memory

Tell your child: "We are going to try to remember where the cards are and match them!"

1. Mix all the cards up.
2. Place all the cards face down in rows.
3. Flip over two cards. Try to label the cards after flipping them over. "I found a spider and a sun." If they match say, "They are the same!" and keep them. If they do not match, then say, "They are different!" or "They are not the same!" and put them back in the same spot.
4. Now your child takes their turn. Encourage your child to tell you what cards they found and whether they are the same or different.
5. The game is over once all the cards are matched. Help your child count out the number of pairs each person has.

If it's too hard to remember where the cards are, keep the cards face up instead. Take turns matching the cards. You can still talk about which cards are the same and different!

Hide and Find

1. Your child closes their eyes while you hide some cards face up around a room.
2. Ask your child to search the room for the cards.
3. When a card is found encourage your child to tell you what they found. They might say “spider” or “I got a spider.” Encourage them to use as many words as they can.
4. Once they find a card, talk about where the card is. Use location words such as ‘on’, ‘under’, ‘in’, ‘beside’, etc. For example, “The spider is ON the couch” or “The spider is BESIDE the book.” If your child is able, ask them to describe where they found the cards.
5. Once your child has found all the cards, change roles and ask them to hide the cards for you.



SONG

Row, Row, Row Your Boat

BABY
TODDLER
CHILD



Row, row, row your boat,
gently down the stream.

Merrily, merrily, merrily, merrily,
life is but a dream.



Lay baby in front of you and move their legs back and forth.

Older children can sit on your lap while you row with their arms. Pull your child toward you, then lean forward and have your child lean back. Continue the rocking motion forward and back as you sing.

Change your actions by talking about how the boat is moving – fast, slow, bumpy, etc.

GAME

Searching for Vehicles

BABY
TODDLER
CHILD



Talk about vehicles.

When you are out with your child, look for vehicles like cars, buses, bicycles, garbage trucks, and airplanes.

Talk about what you see and what these vehicles are used for.

You can extend this activity by drawing pictures of what you saw.

**The Canadian Children's Literacy Foundation
thanks our wonderful literacy partners for
sharing the activities adapted for this booklet.
Please visit their websites for more great
resources!**



www.abclifeliteracy.ca



www.familit.ca



www.readtome.ca

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