



EARLY LITERACY

Early literacy refers to what children know about reading and writing **before** they actually begin to read and write. Children who enter kindergarten with good pre-reading skills will be ready to learn from Day 1. Children who lack familiarity with early literacy practices will spend their earliest days in school trying to make sense of what they're seeing, hearing, and experiencing for the first time. Their peers begin learning ahead of them, and will most likely pull even further ahead as time goes on.

There are five practices that help children develop early literacy skills. They are fun and easy to incorporate into everyday activities. Children **love** doing things with a parent or other caring adult, so use the language you know best and start your child on a path toward reading success.

TALKING

Conversations with children introduce new words and information, leading to a larger, stronger vocabulary. The best way to engage children in conversation is to ask questions. Many children are given commands or directives, but not necessarily asked their opinions or to offer their own thoughts. This is incredibly important! Equally important is that the adult truly listens to the child's answer, and offers a response or another question leading to deeper thinking. Try asking a question, paraphrasing the child's response, then adding a new comment of your own. Use lots of descriptive words when you are speaking.

SONGS, NURSERY RHYMES & FINGER PLAYS

Songs are a natural and engaging way to learn about language. Nursery rhymes and sing-along songs help attune children's ears to the rhythm and flow of our language. The musical qualities of rhythm and rhyme engage children's brains, enabling them to make sense of what they're hearing and commit the sounds to memory. Singing also helps children learn new words and adds to their general knowledge.

READING

Reading together with a child, no matter what age, is **the single most important activity** you can do to help that child get ready to read. Reading introduces children to words they may not hear during normal conversation, and reading quality children's literature attunes their ears to important writing concepts like sentence and story structure. Having a solid vocabulary foundation is critical for success when beginning school, and shared reading time develops a love of reading and appreciation for books. A child's interest in reading is an important predictor of later reading achievement.

WRITING

Reading and writing go together. Both are ways to represent spoken words and communicate information. As children scribble and draw, they practice hand-eye coordination and exercise the muscles in their fingers and hands. This helps develop the fine, grapho-motor skills needed to hold a pencil or crayon and eventually write letters and words.

PLAYING

Children learn about language through different kinds of play. Play helps children think symbolically and develop oral language skills. When children play, they talk about what they are doing, thereby processing their thoughts and actions. They practice putting thoughts into action and words.