

Literacy

By the time they turn one year old, infants have become “language specialists.” The sounds that children “keep” depend on what languages they hear at a young age. While infants are listening and learning, their brains are forming connections. A child’s brain grows faster in the first few months and years of life than it will at any other time. As infants hear more sounds from their home language(s), their brain connections become stronger. Children who hear more words at age one have bigger vocabularies at age two and beyond. The quality of the language children hear matters, too. Children love listening to parentese, the singsong tone of voice adults use with children. Children who hear more parentese tend to have bigger vocabularies.



Ideas For Literacy Activities:

- Tell stories as you do the housework.
- Hang the alphabet up on a clothesline.
- Make rhymes a part of every day.
- Make a salt tray. Pour a container of salt onto a cookie tray. Preschoolers use their fingers to “write” in the salt. They can make letters if they want, or just scribble.
- Trace letters on your child’s back.
- Take time to teach Nursery Rhymes.
- Sing songs together.
- Go to the library.
- Play the alphabet game when you are out and about.
- Read books. Read books. Read books. There is no greater preschool literacy activity, none that takes so little effort on your part, than spending 15 minutes in the morning and 15 minutes in the evening reading picture books to your preschooler.
- What are ways your parents helped your literacy as a child? Try sharing these memories with your child. What is your favorite activity to enhance your child’s literacy? What do you think your child’s favorite activity is?

Home Literacy Checklist

You are your child’s first teacher. Your home is where your child will get his or her first experiences with books and reading. Look around your home and think about what you do with your child. If the statement on the checklist is true, circle T. If the statement is false, circle F. When you are finished, count up the number of circled T’s and find that number on the chart at the end of the checklist. Use the results as a guideline to see what you can do for your child.

24 - 31 Home literacy environment has most of the necessary supportive elements

14 - 23 Home literacy environment has many supportive elements

5 - 13 Home literacy environment has some supportive elements

0 - 5 Home literacy environment could be an area of improvement

What my child has...

- My child has at least one alphabet book. T F
- My child has magnetized alphabet letters to play with. T F
- My child has crayons and pencils readily available for writing and drawing. T F
- My child has paper readily available for writing and drawing. T F
- My child has a table or surface readily available for writing or drawing. T F
- My child has at least one rhyme book. T F
- My child has more than one rhyme book. T F
- My child has at least 10 picture books. T F
- My child has at least 20 picture books. T F
- My child has at least 50 picture books. T F
- My child plays beginning reading and alphabet games on a computer. T F
- My child has materials and games to help learn the alphabet. T F

What I or another adult do...

- I began to read picture books with my child before he or she was a year old. T F
- I or another adult in the house read a picture book with my child at least once a week. T F
- I or another adult in the house read a picture book with my child at least four times a week. T F
- I or another adult in the house teach new words to my child at least once a week. T F
- I or another adult in the house teach new words to my child nearly every day. T F
- I or another adult in the house have a detailed and informative conversation with my child at least once a week. (e.g., "How do you think ice cream is made?"). T F
- I or another adult in the house have a detailed and informative conversation with my child nearly every day. T F
- I or another adult in the house help my child learn nursery rhymes. T F
- I or another adult in the house encourage my child to tell me what he or she wants using complete sentences. T F
- I or another adult in the house take my child to the library or a bookstore at least once every two months. T F
- I or another adult in the house encourage my child to watch beginning reading shows on TV or tapes. T F
- I or another adult in the house encourage my child to play with computer games that introduce the alphabet and beginning reading. T F
- I or another adult in the house help my child learn to sing or say the alphabet. T F
- I or another adult in the house help my child learn to name letters of the alphabet. T F
- I or another adult in the house help my child learn to write letters of the alphabet. T F
- I or another adult in the house help my child learn to write his or her name. T F
- I or another adult in the house help my child learn how to rhyme. I or another adult in the house help my child learn the sounds that letters of the alphabet make (e.g., "M makes the mmmm sound"). T F
- My child sees me or another adult in the house reading a book (or something similar) at least once a week. T F
- My child sees me or another adult in the house reading a book nearly every day. T F

Adapted from GetReadytoRead.org