

Developing early literacy skills now is extremely important in helping your child be successful in school later. Early literacy skills are the abilities your child needs that lead to being able to read and write. These abilities include practicing early writing, recognizing letters and that each letter makes its own sound, enjoying books and learning, understanding that letters make up words, words make up sentences and that by using words a message can be conveyed. These are skills that will benefit them their entire lives.

Children learn from a very young age that what their parents and caregivers spend time doing is important. They look to these people to show them what they need to learn. Children love and trust parents and caregivers more than anyone else. Because of this attachment, these people have the greatest opportunity to teach children what they need to learn. It is often said that parents are their child's first teacher. This is true when it comes to developing language and literacy skills. Children listen and watch their parents and then repeat what they see and hear. This is clear when you see that many children know how to use the latest technology. They see that this is something

important because they watch their parents using their phones to help them with many different tasks throughout the day.

Developing early literacy skills does not happen quickly. It happens slowly over time by having repeated experiences with language, words, seeing print and working with different writing and drawing materials. Every time a child hears a certain word, they gain more knowledge about what that word means. They begin to understand how and when to use that specific word. Eventually, they begin to use each new word correctly. It continues to build until a child can share their thoughts and feelings about their world. To be able to accomplish this, children must be shown how to do it. Once they know how to express their thoughts, they will be able to use those skills to write papers in school, do well in job interviews and be successful in careers and life.

Parents and caregivers can do three simple things to help their children build these necessary skills:

- 1. Have meaningful conversations with your child.** Instead of asking your child what they did today. Tell them what you did and how you felt about. Express your thoughts and feelings. Tell them about everything you are doing and why. This will teach your child how to tell someone about what they have experienced and how they felt about it. It will help them develop the skills they need to think through problems.

-Ideas:

- Tell your child stories about when you were young.
- Talk to them at the grocery store about what you are buying and why you are buying that item. Explain your reasoning about whether to buy a gallon of milk or a half gallon, whether to buy grapes or oranges, etc.

- Tell them stories about when they were babies and show them pictures.

2. Give your child opportunities to read multiple kinds of books/text. By having books available, children learn how to seek out knowledge. They learn that a book is read front to back and that you begin at the top of the page and read from left to right. They see that each letter makes up the words and they learn how to understand what they are reading. By seeing you use the skill of reading to gain knowledge, they will learn that being able to read is important.

-Ideas:

- Go to the library.
- Read the print on cereal boxes, mail, restroom signs.
- Have them help you make a shopping list.
- Take a picture of your child and send it with a text message. Show your child that the words you are typing have meaning.

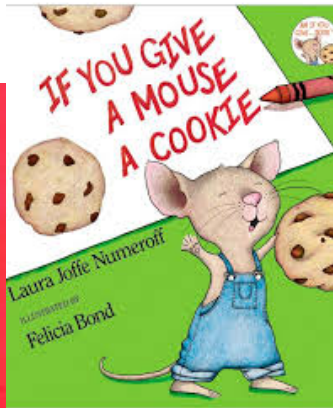
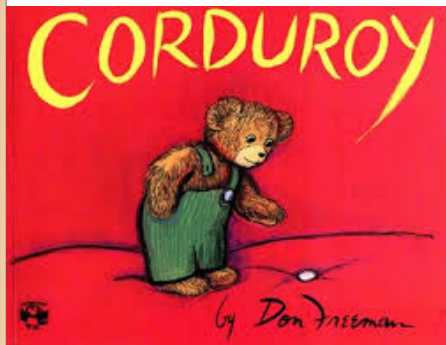
3. Give your child fun opportunities to gain these early skills.

Children learn best through play so make this fun! When they are enjoying a certain activity, they are open and willing to learn anything about it. Use language to teach your child everything about what they are doing. While a child plays with cars on the floor, a parent or caregiver can teach them what sounds cars make, that a car is a vehicle and that there are different kinds of vehicles like trucks and buses. By following your child's lead and then adding more to what they are doing, your child will stay interested in the learning process.

-Ideas:

- Let your child draw with chalk, crayons, pens, markers.

- Sing lots of songs
- Play with them
- Describe what is happening, what you see, hear, feel, etc.



Resources

- Children's music videos in Spanish:
http://www.123teachme.com/learn_spanish/children_songs_lyrics
- Print sheet music, lyrics and watch videos of children's songs for free
<http://www.theteachersguide.com/ChildrensSongs.htm>
- Watch Pete the Cat books with text, songs and reading aloud at Youtube.com, search "Pete the Cat"