



## Keeping Their Eyes and Ears Open: Help Young Children to Read, Write and Make Connections

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Literacy is more than just being able to read. Understanding that speech sounds, letters of the alphabet, and words are all connected is really what literacy is all about.

We all have a natural ability to speak and learn language from birth. You can't teach a child to speak. But, from birth, you can support your child's abilities to speak and eventually reading by making sure she is hearing speech sounds and seeing words and print every day. The more children see and hear, the more connections they will make between words and print, and eventually, they'll have the skills to read and write well.

### Talking and Reading with Infants and Toddlers

It's easy to help your child with literacy - just talking and reading to your baby or toddler is the best way to get him off to a great start. As a parent, holding, looking at, talking to, playing with, and reading to your baby is nurturing his language and literacy skills. Do this every day. Young children are never bored with hearing the sound of your voice, singing the same song, or reading the same book over and over. These activities will help your young one to thrive:

- **Talk and sing to your child from birth.** Your baby loves hearing your voice. As you talk, babies hear the speech sounds, and start making connections between the sounds and what you are doing with them.
- **Play music to get your toddler moving and singing.** Toddlers can't be still - so take advantage of their energy. Music is a great way to get your toddler moving and learning the rhythms of speech and sounds.
- **Give your toddler paper and crayons or markers** to scribble and start the beginning of writing. Let your toddler scribble on blank paper. It is the beginning of writing. It helps with their eye-hand movements and gets them used to holding a crayon or writing tool in their hands, even if it's just with a closed fist.

### Talking and Reading with Preschoolers

At ages 3 and 4, preschoolers are well on their way to building their reading and writing skills. Continue with the activities you did with your preschooler when they were younger. Children at this age are much more interactive and you can have more conversations. You can help stretch their thinking skills and imaginations. Here are some helpful activities for talking and reading with your preschooler.

- **Help your child follow directions.** Use short, clear statements. Start with simple one or two-part directions, such "Sit in the chair", or "Get the book and bring it to me."
- **Read predictable books.** Your child will begin to recognize the repeated words and phrases and have fun saying them with you. Read books that rhyme.
- **Point out words and letters everywhere you can.** Read street signs, traffic signs, billboards, and store signs. Point out certain letters in these signs. Help your preschooler learn to recognize his name in print.

## What Child Care Providers Can Do

Child care programs are an extension of the learning that occurs in the home. If your child is in child care, here are things you should see that will let you know reading, writing, and literacy are being supported at the program.

- There are lots of books and magazines for children to read and handle.
- Print is everywhere: on walls, labels, signs, and posters.
- There are writing materials, including paper, pencils, crayons, and markers for children to use.
- Children are read aloud to everyday, from many different kinds of books.
- Child care providers speak with children throughout the day and listen carefully to what they say.

## Your Child's Progress

Providing opportunities for your child to use language and learn how it connects to reading and writing is one of the most important things you'll ever do for your child. Remember that all children learn and develop differently and may not all be at the same level when it comes to reading and writing.

Reading is key to succeeding in school. Studies show that young children who are read to every day start school with a better chance at succeeding in reading and literacy. The foundation for reading and writing and understanding language starts at birth. Parents are the only ones who have the ability to start that foundation from day one.

## Books for Reading

Ten Tiny Babies by Karen Katz

The Very Hungry Caterpillar by Eric Carle

Brown Bear, Brown Bear What Do You See? by Bill Martin and Eric Carle

Freight Train by Donald Crews

Goodnight Moon by Margaret Wise Brown



For more information:

<http://www.ccaparentnetwork.org/members/1905/06/28/keeping-their-eyes-and-ears-open-help-young-children-to-read-write-and-make-connections/>



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