

*Especially for parents of young children!*

# Out and About

*Literacy Learning Experiences*

Parents often take their babies along when they shop for food, visit relatives, attend older siblings' ball games, eat out, go to the library or book store, and do all sorts of other activities outside the home. Many of these activities provide opportunities for infants to become familiar with letters.

## What is the practice?

Find new ways to expose your infant to the symbols, signs, letters, words, books, and other familiar images you see when you're out 'n' about together.

## What does the practice look like?

A young father takes his 10-month-old daughter to her older sister's Saturday-morning soccer game. Driving in the family car, they pass a familiar shopping center, a billboard with a picture of a dog, a fast-food restaurant, and finally the sign with the name of the soccer field. Along the way, the father points out each landmark to the baby. "Look! 'Greenlife Grocery.' That's where we go food shopping." "See the big doggy? Our dog Jumper is just like that." Labeling and pointing out familiar and often-seen symbols and signs helps infants learn the connection between words and things that they see.



## How do you do the practice?

The many sights and sounds young children experience in their neighborhood and community are opportunities to help them start matching signs and symbols with words. Here are some activities you might try when away from home with your child:

- Think of three or four things that your child sees often. They can be anything that is easy to recognize and especially interesting to a child (playground, supermarket, a relative's home, McDonald's, etc.). Point out the most obvious features of the familiar object or place and describe it to your child ("There's Grandma's big blue house! Let's go see Grandma!").
- Anytime you and your child are in a familiar place (the supermarket, for example), pick three or four things that your child especially likes and can recognize easily (such as cereal boxes, fruits and vegetables, milk, and eggs). Let your child reach for and hold the familiar objects or foods. Describe and name the items for your child.
- Find two or three community or neighborhood places that your child especially enjoys. This can be anyplace from a duck pond or park to a public library, book store, or playground. Find activities you can do in each setting to engage your child in interactions and conversations.

## How do you know the practice worked?

- Does your child recognize signs or symbols more often?
- Does your child vocalize or get excited when she sees familiar people, places, and things?
- Does your child pay attention to the words you use to describe people, events, and so forth?

# Take a look at more out-and-about activities

## *A View from the Bus*

Ten-month-old Paco and his mother take the bus to go food shopping, run errands, and stop in a cafe for lunch. On the way to the shopping area where they can do all these things, they pass what have become many familiar sights. These include his sister's school, the family's church, a playground, billboards, and much more. Paco's mother holds him on her lap so that he can see everything as they go by. As they approach each sight, Mom describes what Paco is about to see and asks him questions like "Do you see \_\_\_\_\_?" and "Where is the \_\_\_\_\_?" These question-and-answer chats have become a kind of game that looks something like *I Spy*. Paco really looks forward to bus rides and playing the game with his mother.



## *Stroll and Chat*

Alex's father and mother push their 5-month-old son down the street in a stroller on their way to the supermarket. Along the way, there are many things to look at and talk about. They point out interesting trees, flowers, animals, people, cars, and so much more. Mom and Dad name and talk about many things they and their son see between home and the store. Whenever Alex sees something that catches his attention, he reaches out, gestures toward it, and babbles. His parents know that if they stop and talk about what has excited Alex, he will listen to what Dad and Mom are saying to him. The more trips they make to the store, the more Alex notices the things that are interesting to him.

## *Shop and Learn*

Food shopping is one of 16-month-old Luke's favorite things to do with his mother. He doesn't have much upper body strength and cannot sit independently in the shopping cart seat, so his mom uses her hand bag and her coat to prop him up so he can see what is going on. Mom has a routine for food shopping, and Luke has learned to recognize what they will be seeing and putting in the cart. Mom talks to Luke throughout their time in the store. "Next we are going to get Luke's favorite food," she says and holds up two kinds of fruit. "Do you want peaches or bananas?" Mom occasionally asks her son to point to items that he recognizes. By the time they are finished shopping, Luke has probably heard the names of 50 different things!

