

Supporting Early Literacy in Natural Environments

- Activities for Caregivers and Young Children
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What are these activities?

- These activities are for parents to help their children develop early language and literacy skills.
- These activities teach three primary skills which include phonological awareness, print awareness and use of language.
- Parents can use the activities during play and daily routines.

You can use these activities when:

- You and your child are together.
- Your child is happy.
- Your child is not hungry.
- Your child is not tired.
- The activity goes along with what your child is doing. (Your child is looking at a book. You can do an activity with a book.)
- Siblings and friends can join in!



Conversations

- # 1 Talking about food
- # 2 Talking about things outside
- # 3 Talking about TV shows
- # 4 Talking about what happened in the past
- # 5 Talking about what will happen next

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Talking about food

Ask your child questions about food:

- What color is it?
- How does that taste?
- How does it smell?
- What do you like the best?





Talking about food



To help your child succeed, you can:

- Talk about how food tastes, smells and feels.
- Ask your child simple questions about his/her food (Does your cookie taste sweet?).
- Do this activity when you and your child are cooking in the kitchen.



To make this activity more challenging, you can:

- Encourage your child to describe food with more than one word (orange, juicy and sour).
- Have your child practice counting raisins and nuts and comparing sizes (big, little) and quantities (more, less).
- Ask your child harder questions about food (Is an apple a fruit or a vegetable? What else tastes sweet?).
- Talk about where foods come from and how they are made.

Talking about things outside

Talking to children about what they see or hear teaches them new words.

Ask your child questions about things he/she sees outside:

- What color is it?
- What do you see?
- How does it feel?
- What shape is this?
- What does that remind you of?
- How would it look if it was snowing?





Talking about things outside



To help your child succeed, you can:

- Talk about something your child can touch and feel.
- Ask your child questions about things he/she is really interested in (rocks, mud, butterflies).
- Ask your child simple questions (Is this rock smooth?)
- Help your child to describe things with more than one word (brown, smooth, hard).



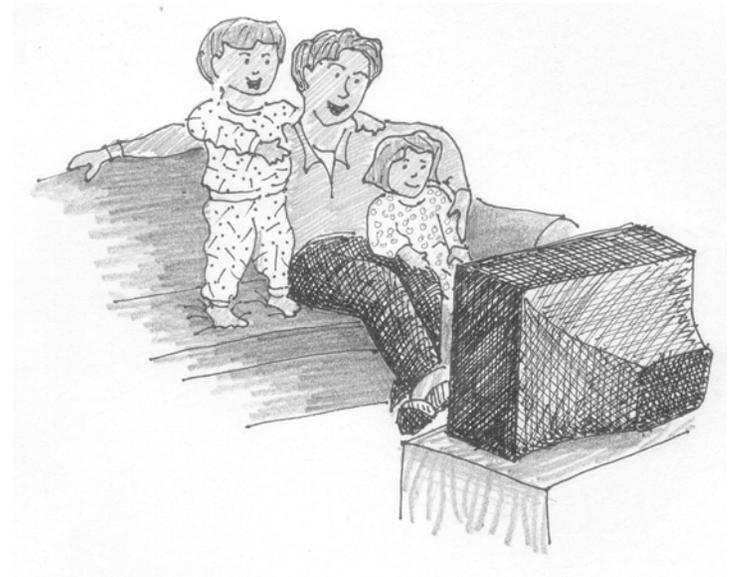
To make this activity more challenging, you can:

- Describe something nearby and see if your child can find it. Have your child describe something for you and try to find it.
- Play with your child at putting things into categories (beetles are insects, an acorn is a nut, a rose is a flower).
- Talk about how things would look different in other weather conditions, or times of the day.
- Ask your child to imagine how things would look different if your child were the size of an ant.

Talking about TV shows

After watching a TV show, ask your child some questions. For example:

- What was it about?
- What did you like about the show?
- What didn't you like about the show?
- Who was your favorite person in the show and why?





Talking about TV shows



To help your child succeed, you can:

- Do this activity with a video your child has watched many times.
- Do this activity with a picture book your child has read many times.
- Watch a show or video that also has toys or a picture book that goes with it.
- Watch programs and videos that are slow moving and have lots of repetition (e.g., Barney).



To make this activity more challenging, you can:

- Talk about the beginning, middle and end of the story. Help your child say things in the right order.
- Talk about events and characters that are real and events and characters that are pretend.
- Ask your child questions about opinions, thoughts and feelings (Why do you think she left? How do you think he felt?).
- Have your child draw a picture of what the show was about.
- Encourage your child to act out his/her favorite part with dolls or stuffed animals.

Talking about what happened in the past

Ask your child what he/she did
after:

- Visiting a friend.
- Visiting a family member.
- Going to a park.
- Going to the library.
- Going to a special event (puppet show).
- Eating out.
- Playing at a friend's house.





Talking about what happened in the past



To help your child succeed,
you can:

- Talk about what your child really enjoyed.
- Talk about something that happens regularly.
- Ask your child simple questions (Did Grandma give you a big hug?).
- Show your child pictures or photographs of what happened (birthday cake, presents).
- Begin a sentence and have your child fill in the blank (At the park we saw three ____?).

To make this activity more challenging,
you can:

- Help your child tell things in the right order (What did you do first? Then, what happened?).
- Have your child draw pictures that go with what happened.
- Help your child write simple sentences under each picture.
- Your child can staple the pictures together to make a book.
- Encourage your child to read his/her book to other people.



Talking about what will happen next

Ask your child what will happen next when you are:

- Reading books to your child.
- Going places your child likes.
- Cooking food.
- Getting your child ready for school.
- Getting your child ready for bed.





Talking about what will happen next



To help your child succeed,
you can:

- Tell your child what will happen next.
- Ask your child simple questions about what will happen next (Will Goldie Locks break the chair?).
- Show your child pictures of what will happen next in his/her daily activities (going to school, going to bed) and talk about them.
- Begin a sentence and have your child fill in the blank (Next, we need to add some ____?).

To make this activity more challenging,
you can:

- Ask your child what will happen next when he/she is playing make-believe.
- Ask your child what will happen tomorrow.
- Ask your child what he/she thinks will happen at a special event (a birthday party, visiting Grandma's).



Learning how to use books

Teach your child:

- What the front of books are.
- What the back of books are.
- How to turn pages from right to left.
- What pages are.
- What words and letters are.





Learning how to use books



To help your child succeed, you can:

- Let your child feel the book's cover, pages and pictures and talk about them.
- Use sturdy cardboard books with thick pages so your child can turn the pages.
- Have your child point to pictures in the book.



To make this activity more challenging, you can:

- Have your child show you how to turn pages from right to left.
- Point to the parts of the book (front, back, pages) and ask your child what they are.
- Ask your child to point to a picture and a word in the book (e.g., show me a picture. Show me a word).
- Have your child point to familiar words in the book.

Looking at pictures in a book

- Talk about what your child is looking at.
- Ask questions about what your child is looking at (What is Spot doing?).
- Wait for your child to say something (Spot hiding.).
- Add a little bit more to what your child says (Spot is hiding under the bed.).





Looking at pictures in a book



To help your child succeed, you can:

- Use a book with large pictures of things your child likes (baby animals).
- Ask your child simple questions (Is the froggy green?).
- Wait longer for your child to say something (Yeah, froggy green.).
- Make a simple sentence out of what your child said (Yes, the froggy is green.).
- Talk about how pictures are different from real things.



To make this activity more challenging, you can:

- Ask your child to make connections to your child's own experiences (Have you seen a doggie like this before?).
- Ask your child harder open-ended questions (Why is Goldilocks breaking Baby Bear's things? What is a kennel?).
- Add more to what your child said (She is too big for his things, because she probably is older than him.).
- Talk about opinions, thoughts and feelings (How do you think Baby Bear will feel? Why think Spot is hiding?).

Learning about books' covers

Before reading a book, look at the cover and:

- Read the title and talk about what the book may be about.
- Point to the author's name and explain that the person wrote the story.
- Point to the illustrator's name and explain that the person drew the pictures.





Learning about books' covers



To help your child succeed, you can:

- Do this activity with your child's favorite book.
- Read the title to your child.
- Tell your child the author wrote the story.
- Tell your child the illustrator drew the pictures.

To make this activity more challenging, you can:

- Point to the parts of the cover and ask your child what they are.
- Encourage your child to make a cover for one of his/her homemade books.
- Have your child teach you the parts of a cover.



Showing your child how to read

- Put your finger under the words you read.
- Show your child how you read from left to right.
- Ask your child to point to the letters he/she knows, like the letters in his/her name.





Showing your child how to read



To help your child succeed, you can:

- Use a book with a simple sentence on each page.
- Use a book with big print.
- Use a book you have read to your child many times.
- Use a book about something your child is really interested in.
- Listen to a book on tape together.

To make this activity more challenging, you can:

- Have your child point to the words and then read them to him/her.
- Have your child sound out a few words he/she is familiar with.
- Talk about how the print, not the pictures, tells the story.
- Talk about what a letter is and what a number is.



Making a touch book

- Cut cardboard into same sized pieces.
- Put three holes in the pieces on the left side.
- Tie the pieces together with yarn, so you will have a book.
- Put one thing your child likes on each page (rattle, rings, and keys).
- Talk about the things while your child touches them.
- Have your child take the book to school and share with the teacher.





Making a touch book



To help your child succeed, you can:

- Make only two pages.
- Turn the pages for your child.
- Help your child touch the things on the pages.
- Put food (M&M's, Cheerios, crackers) in baggies, put them on the pages and let your child eat the food.

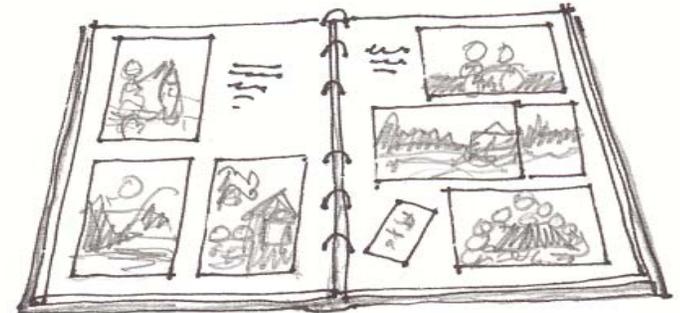
To make this activity more challenging, you can:

- Put new things (cotton, aluminum foil, yarn) on the pages.
- Have your child turn the pages him/herself.
- Encourage your child to say what is on each page.



Making a picture book

- Cut cardboard into same sized pieces.
- Put three holes in the pieces on the left side.
- Tie the pieces together with yarn, so you will have a book.
- Put a picture of someone or something your child likes on each page (family, pets and Teddy Bear).
- Talk about what your child sees.
- Have your child take the book to school and share with the teacher.





Making a picture book

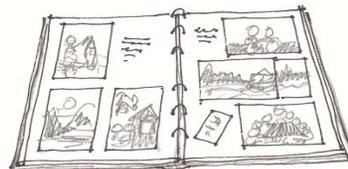


To help your child succeed, you can:

- Make the pictures bigger.
- Turn the pages for your child.
- Let your child touch the pictures.
- Name who is in each picture.
- Show your child the book when he/she is in a quiet mood.

To make this activity more challenging, you can:

- Have more persons in the pictures.
- Have your child name who is in each picture.
- Talk about what your child does with each picture.
- Have the people's names written under their pictures.



Making a book

With your child:

- Paste pictures on pieces of paper.
- Write a sentence under each picture.
- Staple the pieces of paper together.
- Make books about birthdays, trips and favorite things.
- Have your child take the book to school and share with the teacher.





Making a book



To help your child succeed, you can:

- Use pictures of things your child really likes (kitties, puppies).
- Do the pasting and stapling yourself.
- Write what the pictures are (black puppy).
- Talk about what the things in the pictures are.

To make this activity more challenging, you can:

- Have your child pick the pictures him/herself.
- Encourage your child to do the pasting and stapling him/herself.
- Encourage your child to write a sentence under each picture.
- Have your child read what he/she wrote.



Talking about a story

After reading a book or listening to a book on tape with your child, you can:

- Have your child talk about the story.
- Ask what the characters did (What did the wolf do?).
- Have your child draw a picture about the story and write down what your child says.
- Start a sentence and have your child fill in the blank.





Talking about a story



To help your child succeed, you can:

- Do this activity with your child's favorite book.
- Talk about the story yourself.
- Talk about your child's favorite character.
- Have some objects, toys or photographs that relate to the story.



To make this activity more challenging, you can:

- Ask your child for opinions about the story (What did you like about the story?).
- Ask your child questions about something that happened after a certain event (What did she do after she broke Baby Bear's chair?).
- Ask your child to explain things (Why were the mice happy?).
- Ask your child to imagine other events (What would happen if? What else could she have done?).

Listening to music

Listen to music when your child is:

- Playing.
- Falling asleep.
- Riding in the car.

Move to the music with your child.





Listening to music

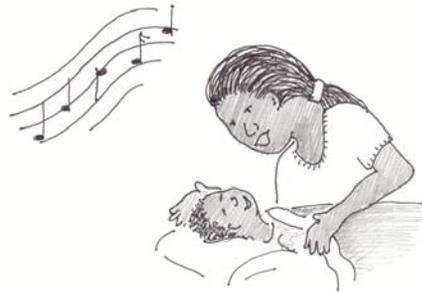


To help your child succeed, you can:

- Have music your child really likes.
- Have music on when your child does his/her favorite things.
- Move with your child to the music.

To make this activity more challenging, you can:

- Play different kinds of music.
- Encourage your child to move to the music.
- Encourage your child to make sounds (La La) or sing.



Doing things with music

Do things while listening to music with your child:

- Sing
- Clap
- Dance
- Talk about how the music makes your child feel.





Doing things with music



To help your child succeed, you can:

- Encourage your child to make sounds (La La).
- Help your child clap or pat something like your hand.
- Rock your child to the rhythm of the music.
- Ask your child simple questions (Does this music make you happy? Is this music fast or slow, loud or soft?)



To make this activity more challenging, you can:

- Encourage your child to sing.
- Let your child use a musical instrument like a toy drum, or make music with sticks and stones, pots, pans, plastic containers and a wooden spoon.
- Ask your child open-ended questions (How does this music make you feel? What does this music make you think of?)

Singing songs

While singing songs to your child or listening to songs on the radio, you can:

- Help your child make body movements that go with the words (Row, Row Your Boat).
- Encourage your child to sing along.
- Make up your own song about something you are doing, or that your child is interested in.





Singing songs



To help your child succeed, you can:

- Sing your child's favorite songs.
- Sing a song while doing something your child enjoys (bath or swinging).
- Give your child a toy or object that relates to the song (toy animals when singing Old MacDonald Had a Farm).
- Encourage your child to say a few words (Row, Row).
- Make up songs with animal sounds or sounds of objects and have your child say the sounds with you.

To make this activity more challenging, you can:

- Encourage your child to sing the song without your help.
- Encourage your child to make up his/her own words to the song.
- Draw a picture of what the song is about.
- Talk about what the song is about. Ask what your child likes about the song.



Making up silly songs

Do different things while singing a song with your child:

- Make up words to a song (Row, Row My Car).
- Make up silly words to a song (Bow, Bow my Squoat).





Making up silly songs



To help your child succeed, you can:

- Make up a song that describes what you or your child are doing (Drive, Drive My Car. Eat, Eat Your Food).
- Make up songs with animal sounds or sounds of objects (The Cow Goes Moo; The Car Goes Broom).
- Say some real words and silly words and see if your child can pick out the silly words.
- Have your child make a sound (ba) and make up a silly word with your child's sound (batton, bannny).

To make this activity more challenging, you can:

- Have your child make up a song that describes what your child is doing (Cut, Cut My Paper).
- Make a sound (za), have your child make up a silly word (zat, zanana) and use that word in a song.
- Talk about long words (with many sounds and letters) and short words.
- Have your child draw a picture about the silly song.
- Help your child write his/her silly words on his/her picture.



Listening to different sounds

Have your child listen for:

- Birds and insects
- Cars and airplanes
- Animals
- Leaves rustling in the wind
- Water

Talk about how these things sound.





Listening to different sounds



To help your child succeed, you can:

- Have your child listen for things your child can see.
- Have your child listen for things your child likes.
- Have your child listen for loud things (cars, trucks, dogs barking).
- Do this activity in a familiar place (backyard).
- Choose a quiet place with just a few sounds.



To make this activity more challenging, you can:

- Have your child listen for quiet things (cats meowing, people walking).
- Have your child listen to things that your child cannot see. Ask your child to guess what is making the sound.
- Have your child describe what he/she hears with a simple sentence. (The dog is barking. That's a big truck.).
- Ask your child to tell where sounds come from (down there, close to us).