

Early Literacy Skills: Reading

How does reading with children help them get ready to read?

The single most important activity for building the knowledge required for eventual success in reading is reading aloud to children.

Print Motivation

The more fun a child has reading books, the more likely he or she will want to learn to read and become an independent reader. Read all types of books that a child might enjoy, including pop-ups, wordless books, fiction and non-fiction.

Print Awareness

Children who spend time with books gradually learn the basics of printed language that will allow them to jump right into reading when they are in school.

Letter Knowledge

Learning letter names, shapes and sounds are building blocks to being able to sound out words on a page. Reading books and looking at letters throughout is a great way to help children make the connection between letters and words.

Vocabulary

Picture book texts have a higher incidence of rare and less common words than typical conversations. Multiple readings of picture books provide children with repeated exposure to new words. Providing short definitions can help children learn new words while you read.

Phonological Awareness

Language games such as rhyming, tongue twisters and playing with syllables help children begin to learn phonological awareness. Rhyming books, books that incorporate songs and nursery rhymes all help build these skills.

Narrative Skills

Conversation before, during and after stories, retelling and asking children open-ended questions all help children think about the story they just read and learn sequencing, which all help build comprehension skills.

Source: Colorado Libraries for Early Literacy, CLEL.org/FiveEarlyLiteracyPractices



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Early Literacy Skills: Writing

How does writing with children help them get ready to read?

There is a strong connection between reading and writing. When children are given a chance to explore scribbling, draw pictures and tell stories, they are learning reading skills.

Print Motivation

Writing helps children feel connected to print in a different way than listening to a story. Being an active participant in writing helps keep children excited about stories and reading.

Print Awareness

Drawing pictures and writing letters then words helps develop print awareness. Doing this develops the understanding that marks on a page can carry meaning, just as spoken language does.

Letter Knowledge

Allowing children to practice making lines, curves and circles will later inspire them to write letters on purpose. Children sometimes will make marks or scribble, look at it and be able to identify letters they see.

Vocabulary

Caregivers can prompt discussions by modeling writing for children and then discussing what they are writing and why. Talking about grocery lists and to-do lists provides opportunities to increase a child's vocabulary while also encourage writing.

Narrative Skills

Some of the first stages of writing involve drawing pictures and then telling stories about what the pictures represent. Encourage a child's narrative skills by saying "Tell me about this picture!" or "What's happening in this picture?"

Phonological Awareness

Preschool-aged children often begin to make intentional marks on paper and write "messages" using "inventive spelling." They are thinking very carefully about the sounds that they hear and the letters they know then putting them in writing.

Source: Colorado Libraries for Early Literacy, CLEL.org/FiveEarlyLiteracyPractices



Early Literacy Skills: Talking

How does talking with children help them get ready to read?

Children learn about language – both spoken and written – by listening to their parents and caregivers talk and joining in the conversation themselves.

Print Motivation

Asking questions about a story as you read together helps children make connections between the books and his/her own life. This connection gets children excited to read more books.

Print Awareness

Talking about print that is all around helps children learn that print has meaning. The print can be in books, on signs or anywhere else in the environment. Helping a child notice the print and talking about it together help a child get ready to read.

Letter Knowledge

Children need to know three things about letters: the names, the shape and the sounds they make. Naming letters on signs, pointing out letter shapes in sidewalk cracks or buildings and voicing letter sounds while interacting are all ways to make these connections.

Vocabulary

The more words children hear in conversations during their early childhoods, the larger their vocabulary will be when they go to school. That big vocabulary helps children recognize words when they see them for the first time in print.

Phonological Awareness

When parents slow down their speech, like in “parentese,” it stretches out the words and helps children learn the individual sounds that make up words. Playing rhyming and letter sound games can help children learn these structural sounds as well.

Narrative Skills

When children listen to stories orally, they learn the structure of a story. This helps them begin to tell their own stories. Listening to adults talk about their lives also helps children build background knowledge, which they can use later to help them comprehend new ideas.

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Early Literacy Skills: Singing

How does singing with children help them get ready to read?

Singing helps children break down the smaller sounds in words, teaching them how to sound out words when reading on their own. Singing can also introduce new vocabulary and help with narrative skills.

Print Motivation

Children love singing. A great option to encourage not only reading, but also singing, is to read books that can be sung. These can include nursery rhymes, books that promote singing or books that can be sung to a specific tune.

Print Awareness

A foundational early literacy skill is understanding that print has meaning. To help children make this connection, print out lyrics to favorite songs or read books that can be sung.

Letter Knowledge

Letter knowledge is a shape recognition skill so any rhyme or song that talks about how things are the same and different can help build skills children need to identify letters. "The ABC Song" helps them learn letter names and alphabetical order too!

Vocabulary

Just like books, songs have great vocabulary words. Hearing new words in context helps children build their vocabularies. In addition, songs have a long tradition of being used as memory boosters.

Phonological Awareness

Listening to and singing songs is one of the best ways for children to build their phonological awareness because often each syllable is connected to a note. Many songs and rhymes have rhyming words too, which helps children hear the individual parts of each word.

Narrative Skills

Many childhood songs and rhymes are little stories and listening to them helps children learn story structure and sequencing through a beginning, a problem in the middle and a resolution at the end. When children sing these songs, they become storytellers.

Source: Colorado Libraries for Early Literacy, CLEL.org/FiveEarlyLiteracyPractices



Early Literacy Skills: Playing

How does playing help children get ready to read on their own?

Print Motivation

Exposing children to many genres and topics can get your child excited about books and build background knowledge for playtime. Parents can also follow their child's interest by bringing home books about topics their child is interested in and likes to act out.

Print Awareness

Play time can be an opportunity to show children that print is used in a wide variety of ways. Drivers use maps, chefs use recipes, shoppers use lists. The more children see writing in their play props, the more they learn that print is something that is all around them.

Letter Knowledge

Children learn through all of their senses, so exploration of shapes and letter forms via puzzles, play dough, sensory tables and body movements all help children build their letter knowledge. Sorting games and matching activities directly involve shape recognition and prepare children to recognize small differences in letters.

Vocabulary

As children play, they often discuss their scenarios, actions and props, such as, "This stick is the magic wand and I'm going to turn you into a butterfly." This gives them a chance to practice new vocabulary. They also learn new words when an adult introduces new ideas. For example, "What would you like for dessert? Would you like cake or a sundae? A sundae is ice cream in a bowl with chocolate sauce and sprinkles on top."

Phonological Awareness

Singing isn't the only way to build phonological awareness skills. Chanting games ("Who Stole the Cookies from the Cookie Jar?"), clapping games ("Miss Mary Mack") and rhyming games ("Down By the Bay") all contribute to this as well by highlighting the rhythms and sounds of oral language and involving the whole body.

Narrative Skills

When children act out stories they know, either as a play or with props or puppets, they practice sequencing events. They also are exploring and investigating story structure. Oral language is the critical component that helps build narrative skills. This includes talking about their play, describing what they are doing, negotiating roles and discussing props.

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