Early Literacy

Early Literacy is what children know about reading and writing before they read and write. There are six essential skills of early literacy. This flip book defines each skill and gives you fun ideas to help develop it in your growing child.

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Letter Awareness

Letter Awareness is knowing that letters are different from each other and they have different names and sounds.

For Babies:
- Give babies lots of shapes to explore—describe them to the baby

For Toddlers:
- Share some very easy ABC books with toddlers. Look for books with simple pictures
- Sing the alphabet song
- Explore blocks and balls together. Talk about the shapes

For Preschoolers:
- Cut or print pairs of large letters out of magazines and let children match them up with each other
- Point out letters in the environment whenever possible
- When grocery shopping, look for the first letter of your child’s name (that magic letter) on items on the shelf
- Put letter magnets on the refrigerator for your child to explore

Print Awareness

Print Awareness is noticing print everywhere and understanding the properties of print—that in English, we read from front to back, from top to bottom and from left to right. Sharing books with our children from birth, will help develop these skills with very little effort.

For Babies:
- Share books with babies often
- Cuddle babies and walk around places pointing out and reading print whenever that is possible

For Toddlers:
- Toddlers love to point. Point out street signs and store signs when you are walking or driving
- Share books with toddlers often (try to follow their lead) Don’t worry if it’s only for a few minutes at a time. Toddlers are busy!

For Preschoolers:
- Point out specific words on the page of a book, newspaper or magazine and talk about that word with your child. Ask your child to point to the word
- Occasionally run your fingers across the words as you read
- When grocery shopping, ask your child to locate certain items—i.e. specific boxes of cereal, specific brands of butter etc.

Print Motivation

Print Motivation is a child’s interest in and enjoyment of books. The more fun that you have sharing books together, the more your child will love books. Loving book will help motivate them to read and keep reading. Share books that interest your child. Have fun reading together!

For Babies:
- Share books when your baby is interested and alert. Stop when they seem done. Try again later.
- Babies love photographs of the human face. Look for books with photographs of people

For Toddlers:
- Look for books that have very simple pictures. These are more pleasing to the easily over stimulated toddler
- Follow your toddler’s lead—read when your child wants to read and stop when your child wants to stop. Two minutes ten times a day is just as effective as one 20 minute setting

For Preschoolers:
- Read books that your child loves as often as you can stand!
- Link your child’s interest in the world to books on that subject—i.e. bugs, rainbows, cars, animals etc.
- Look for other books by authors your child enjoys
Narrative Skills

Narrative Skills is the ability to describe things and events and tell stories. This is a building block for reading comprehension. Giving your child many opportunities to share in their own words is a wonderful way to develop strong narrative skills.

For Babies:
- Talk to your baby as you move through your day—narrate what you are doing
- Converse with your baby—take turns talking or in their case—babbling. This is beginning conversation

For Toddlers:
- Turn daily events into simple stories—"Do you know what I saw today?"
- Begin to focus on words like before, after, sooner, later etc.

For Preschoolers:
- Encourage your child to narrate their day. Ask open ended questions about what they are doing.
- Encourage your child to "read" familiar books to you
- When your child draws a picture, have them tell you about what is in the picture. Write down what they "dictate" to you and add this as a caption to the picture. Hang it up for display.

Vocabulary

Vocabulary is knowing the names of things. Your child will have a much easier time reading if they know a lot of words. Books have many unusual words and are the perfect tools to develop larger vocabularies

For Babies:
- Talk, talk, talk! The sound of your voice is your baby's sweetest music
- Name things in the environment whenever you have the opportunity

For Toddlers:
- During this explosive period of language development, name everything that interests your child
- Keep talking and don't hesitate to use your big words
- Use sign language whenever possible

For Preschoolers:
- Read lots of books—children's books contain an enormous amount of words that we rarely use in everyday life
- Engage your child in conversation whenever possible. Always encourage them to use their words
- Provide a myriad of opportunities for your child to tell stories and describe things. Ask lots of questions, and then listen! The more words your child hears and then uses, the greater their vocabulary will be.

Phonological Awareness

Phonological Awareness is the ability to hear and play with the smaller sounds in words. Wordplay, rhymes and singing are easy and fun ways to develop this skill.

For Babies:
- Sing songs as often as possible
- Play rhyming games (peek-a-boo etc)

For Toddlers:
- Dance to music whenever possible
- Sing songs in different voices—ie squeaky, high, low, deep, fancy etc.
- Read and recite Mother Goose rhymes together as well as fingerplays, tickles and bounces
- Practice sorting whenever possible—by color, size, shape etc.

For Preschoolers:
- Play with rhyming words even if they are nonsense words (these still rhyme!)
- Sing songs all the time (much better than a DVD in the car!)
- Play with tongue twisters together
- Continue to use fingerplays, rhymes and songs
- Read rhyming books together
- Read books you can sing and sing them together