

Parent Guide to Early Literacy for Talkers: Four- and Five-Year-Olds

WHAT CAN I DO TO HELP?

Learning words begins at birth and grows throughout a child's life. Most children start school knowing between 3,000 and 5,000 words.

Vocabulary

- ✦ Talk with your child about what is going on around you. Talk about how things work, feelings and ideas.
- ✦ When your child talks with you, add more detail to what she says.
- ✦ Speak in the language that is most comfortable for you.
- ✦ Read together every day. When you talk about the story and pictures, your child hears and learns more words.
- ✦ Learn together by reading some true books on subjects that your child likes.
- ✦ **Research shows that children who have larger vocabularies are better readers. Knowing many words helps children recognize written words and understand what they read.**

Print Motivation

- ✦ Make book-sharing time a special time for closeness between you and your child.
- ✦ Let your child see you reading.
- ✦ Visit your public library often.
- ✦ **Children who enjoy books will want to learn how to read.**

Narrative Skills

- ✦ Listen to your child carefully when he talks.
- ✦ Ask your child to tell you about something that happened. Let him tell you about a picture he drew.
- ✦ Share books together.
- ✦ Stories help children understand that things happen in order—first, next, last.
- ✦ Read a book together that your child already knows. Switch what you do. You be the listener and let your child tell you the story.
- ✦ Ask “what” questions. Point to a picture and say, “What’s that?” or “What is happening here?”
- ✦ Add to what your child says. If your child says, “big truck” then you say, “Yes, a big red fire truck.”
- ✦ Ask open-ended questions like, “What do you think is happening in this picture?”
- ✦ Help your child relate what is happening in the story to her own experience, for example, “What happened when we went on a picnic?”
- ✦ **Being able to tell or retell a story helps children understand what they read.**



Print Awareness

- ✦ Read aloud everyday print—labels, signs, lists, menus. Print is everywhere!
- ✦ Point to some of the words as you say them, especially words that are repeated.
- ✦ Let your child turn the pages.
- ✦ Let your child hold the book and read or tell the story.
- ✦ Hold the book upside down. See if your child turns the book around.
- ✦ **Being familiar with printed language helps children feel comfortable with books and understand that print is useful.**

Letter Knowledge

- ✦ Write your child's name.
- ✦ Make letters from clay or use magnetic letters.
- ✦ Point out and name letters when reading alphabet books, signs or labels.
- ✦ Show your child that the same letter can look different.
- ✦ Write words that interest your child (like “dinosaur” or “truck”) using crayons, magnetic letters or pencil and paper.
- ✦ **Knowing the names and sounds of letters helps children figure out how to say written words.**



Phonological Awareness

Most children who have an understanding of phonological awareness have an easier time learning to read. Help your pre-reader become aware of the smaller sounds that make up words.

- ✦ Ask whether two words rhyme: “Do ‘cat’ and ‘dog’ rhyme?” “Do ‘cat’ and ‘hat’ rhyme?”
- ✦ Say words with word chunks left out: “What word would we have if you took the ‘hot’ away from ‘hotdog’?”
- ✦ Put two word chunks together to make a word: “What word would we have if we put ‘cow’ and ‘boy’ together?”
- ✦ Say words with sounds left out: “What word would we have if we took the ‘buh’ sound away from ‘bat’?”
- ✦ Say rhymes and make up your own silly, nonsense rhymes together.
- ✦ Sing songs. Songs have different notes for each syllable in a word.
- ✦ Read some poetry together. Make up short poems together. Say the words that rhyme.
- ✦ Say rhymes and sing songs in the language most comfortable for you.

Have fun!

Most children who have difficulty reading have trouble with phonological awareness.