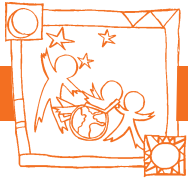


early literacy & your infant or toddler



EARLY STEPS



It may sound silly or even a little confusing to think about “literacy” and your little one. But would it help to know that literacy for a very young child does not mean teaching infants and toddlers how to read? Whew!

Babies learn language from their parents or caregivers. Listening, understanding, and speaking are the skills that will lead to reading as your child grows. Children who experience a developmental delay or a disability may develop these skills at a slower rate. However, there are many fun activities that you and your child can do together that will help.

Practice is the key to success but be careful not to overwhelm your infant or toddler with too many activities. Find opportunities in everyday routines such as mealtimes, bath time, when diapering your child, at bedtime, during playtime and other times throughout the day for learning and practicing skills. Most importantly, make it fun and keep it interesting for your child! As appropriate, you can add to the fun by including sisters, brothers, grandparents, and others in the activity.

LISTEN TO SOUNDS

- Pay attention to the sounds of your home, your neighborhood, and the sounds of nature. For example, listen for the sound your telephone makes, the sound of the buzzer on the stove or microwave timer, the sound of the garbage truck backing up, or the sounds of frogs at night.
- Imitate those sounds and ask your child to imitate them.
- When your child is able, ask him or her to imitate sounds and you try to guess what they are.

car

sar

da-da-da

PLAY WITH SOUNDS

- Take turns making silly sounds. Make a sound and encourage your child to make a sound. Repeat the sound your child makes.
- Practice saying the beginning sounds of words such as familiar animals or objects. For example: “ba-ba-ba” for baby or bottle or “da-da-da” for dog.
- Have fun repeating sounds and words that rhyme.
- Make up silly words by changing the first sound in a word. For example: car, gar, sar, dar, lar, tar.

ba-ba-ba

dar

lar





MUSIC ISN'T JUST FOR LISTENING FUN!

- **PLAY** music often!
- **FEEL** the music. Rock your child to the rhythm of the music. Clap or bang on pots to the rhythm of the music.
- **HUM** along to the music with your child. Have your child touch your mouth or neck to feel the music.
- **SING** along with the music together – the words don't matter at first. Just sing!
- **DANCE** to the music.
- **MAKE UP** silly songs to sing. As your child grows, encourage him or her to add words or verses.
- **ACT** out the activities in a simple song. If the song is about brushing your teeth, act out the movements of getting your toothbrush, squeezing toothpaste onto the brush, putting the brush into your mouth and brushing your teeth.



NAME EVERYTHING

- Use your child's name when talking to him or her.
- Use names of family members and friends.
- Use the names of things around the house. For example:
"Let's put water into the bathtub for your bath."
- Point to body parts. For example:
"You have 1-2-3-4-5 toes on your foot."
or
"I have two ears. Can you show me your ears?"
- Name colors and sizes. For example:
"Here is your big purple ball."
or
"Let's put water in a small bowl for your kitten."
- Identify clothing when getting dressed.
- Notice and talk about signs.
- Name familiar items in the grocery store and as you put them in the shopping cart.



EXPLORE THROUGH TOUCH!

- Make marks in sand with your fingers, toes, or even elbows. If you don't have sand, try using some sugar or salt poured onto a plastic placemat or waxed paper. Be watchful that your child doesn't put sand, sugar or salt in his mouth. Put the used sand, sugar or salt in a plastic bag for another day.
- Have fun and get messy with finger paint. Draw a circle in the paint with your finger and ask your child to draw a circle too. When she makes a mark, imitate her.
- Let your child explore the textures of food with his fingers. Use a variety of foods such as pudding, applesauce, or even plain spaghetti.
- Have fun scribbling! Make marks on paper with crayons, markers or a paintbrush. Let your child experiment by holding the marker or paintbrush with her toes.
- As your child's skills grow, imitate letters and words in the sand, with food or with markers.
- When ready, use magnetic alphabet letters on the refrigerator to make words or to "write a message" to a family member. Sitting on the floor together will make it easier at first.



BOOKS AND PRINTED MATERIALS TELL A STORY

- Read with your child everyday, even if you only have a few minutes. Use picture books, photo albums, magazines or even catalogs. Ask your toddler to select the book or magazine to read. Your public library is a great place to check out books for free.
- Hold your infant or toddler on your lap while reading. As your child grows, sit closely together.
- Involve your child while you are reading! Even before children speak, it is important that they begin to understand that words and pictures have meaning.
- Talk about the parts of a book: cover, title, author, pages, words/letters, and pictures.

“Let’s open the cover and see what’s inside.”

- Use your finger to follow the words in a story.
- Talk about the characters or pictures in the book. Ask questions, but resist the urge to answer too quickly for your child. Be patient and give your child time to answer. For example:

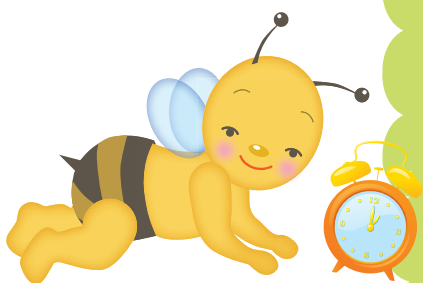
Ask, “Where is the red apple?”

Wait briefly, and if your child doesn’t respond or isn’t yet able to, point to the apple and say, “There is the red apple!”

Ask “How many eyes does the elephant have?”

Wait for the answer and then engage your child by asking, “How many eyes do YOU have?”

- Ask your child to tell you a story and write it down. Help your child, as needed, to use crayons or markers to draw pictures for the story. Stickers work too. Then celebrate! Your child has become an author.



BEE IN THE KNOW

You know your child best. Activities will be more fun and productive when your child is in a happy mood and not tired or hungry. Not all children will be interested in all activities and that is OK! If the activity is too difficult, make it simpler. And finally, pay attention to your child’s body language. Once he or she becomes tired or no longer interested, simply stop the activity.

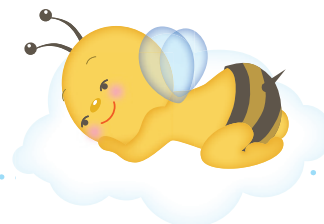
Offer lots of playtime opportunities to help develop your child’s fine motor skills. Using Play-Doh®, puzzles, crayons, and paint brushes now will help your child to use pencils and pens later.

The activities described will create a literacy rich home environment that will help your infant or toddler develop the skills necessary for talking, reading and writing. If needed, your Early Intervention Service Coordinator and other providers can help you change or modify the activities to meet your child’s special needs. Be sure to let them know if you have concerns about your child’s development.

10 QUESTIONS to help you know if the activities are helping your child's literacy and language skills grow and develop:

- 1 Does your infant or toddler seem excited about the activity?
- 2 Is your child participating or trying to participate more in the activity?
- 3 Does your child try to get you to begin an activity with him?
- 4 Is your child using more sounds or words (real and made up) to name things or "talk" with you?
- 5 Is your child having more fun while listening to music such as rocking, bouncing, or clapping to music?
- 6 Does your child seem more interested in making marks or scribbling?
- 7 Does your child point to letters or words in books or magazines to get you to say them or try to say them?
- 8 Is your child beginning to point out words or letters in other environments? For example, street signs you see when walking in the neighborhood, signs you see in the doctor's office, or signs in other places.
- 9 Is your child more interested in being read to and looking at books and magazines?
- 10 Is your toddler interested in being a storyteller?

Source: **Center for Early Literacy Learning** www.earlyliteracylearning.org



RESOURCES AND MORE ACTIVITIES

Center for Early Literacy Learning (CELL) - www.earlyliteracylearning.org

The goal of the Center for Early Literacy Learning (CELL) is to promote the use of evidence-based early literacy learning practices. This site has great resources for parents, early childhood intervention practitioners, and other caregivers of children, birth to five years of age, with identified disabilities, developmental delays, and those at-risk.

ZERO TO THREE - www.zerotothree.org

(look for literacy information under the "Behavior and Development" tab) ZERO TO THREE is a national, nonprofit organization that informs, trains, and supports professionals, policymakers, and parents in their efforts to improve the lives of infants and toddlers.

**The NC
Infant-Toddler Program**
1-855-623-2759
www.beeearly.nc.gov



**The Central Directory of Resources
at FSN - Family Support Network**
1-800-852-0042
www.fsnnc.org

1-800-962-6817
www.ecac-parentcenter.org

ECAC is NC's Parent Training and Information Center (PTI) and all services are provided at no cost.



State of North Carolina • Department of Health and Human Services • Division of Public Health
www.ncdhhs.gov • www.beeearly.nc.gov

NC DHHS is an equal opportunity employer and provider.
10,000 copies of this public document were printed at a cost of \$1874.00 or \$0.187 each. 6/13