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Early Literacy

Words, sounds, storybooks, songs and nursery rhymes: these are the building blocks of literacy.

	Reading	Listening and Talking	Singing	Writing
Babies...	...like to look at pictures of familiar things, listen to short stories and touch the pages.	...learn by listening to you talk. They imitate you by moving their mouths and making sounds.	...enjoy listening to your voice as well as the calming rhythms and playful beats of music.	...start their writing skills by grasping at objects.
Toddlers/ Pre-schoolers...	...can sit and listen to a story, turn pages and talk about pictures.	...share their thoughts and can have a conversation.	...have favorite songs and like to sing along with you.	...learn by scribbling, drawing and pretending to write.

You can give your child a head start by beginning now.

- Read or tell stories together every day.
- Teach new words.
- Sing songs and nursery rhymes.
- Ask questions.
- Use play to introduce language.

Help your child explore language and learning by following these simple steps:

Read or tell stories together every day, starting at birth. Read from a book, simply talk about the pictures or make up stories based on what you see. When you read together, you help your child learn to love books — and you!

Teach new words anytime you can. Talk to your child about what you see around you and what you are doing. The more you speak, the more you build your child's vocabulary.

Sing songs and nursery rhymes over and over again. Add songs and rhymes into all of your routines, sing "Rock-a-Bye Baby" at bedtime, "Rub-a-Dub-Dub" at bathtime.

Ask questions and watch for their responses. From day one, ask your child *where* and *what* whenever you can — at the store, on a walk, while looking at pictures or reading stories. Ask questions about the past, present and future.

Use play to introduce language. Give your child books, musical instruments and other toys. When you interact with your child in a playful way, you introduce new words, sounds and concepts.

Tips to Boost Your Child's Language Development

These ideas offer ways to build your child's literacy skills, preparing her for success in school and beyond.

Reading

Babies

- Provide your child picture books with simple objects or faces.
- Give him board or cloth books with pages that turn easily and won't tear.
- Offer him books with soft, rough or bumpy textures to touch and feel.

Toddlers and Preschoolers

- Have your child point to familiar objects — numbers, colors, letters.
- Ask your child to tell stories about the pictures.
- Choose books about topics of interest like animals or trains — and big events like toilet training or the birth of a new sibling.

Talking and Listening

Babies

- Talk to your child about what you see and what you are doing.
- Listen as she communicates with coos, smiles, laughs and cries.

Toddlers and Preschoolers

- Have conversations where you take turns talking and listening.
- Talk about the events of yesterday, today and tomorrow.
- Play hide-and-seek, talking about what you see as you look. Your child will listen closely while she hides.

Singing

Babies

- Play music and watch as your child bounces and babbles to the beat.
- Sing favorite songs over and over again.

Toddlers and Preschoolers

- Teach your child songs that have hand movements.
- Teach him simple sing-along songs like "Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star."

Writing

Babies

- Encourage your child to hold soft toys or rattles, which help develop grasping skills.
- Play with puzzles that have oversized numbers and letters.

Toddlers and Preschoolers

- Let your child play with and trace magnetic or foam letters and numbers.
- Allow her to draw freely and creatively.

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