

Early Literacy Skills ABC's

Children begin to learn the underlying skills for reading and writing long before they begin kindy and school. From an early age toddlers and even babies are interested in looking at pictures in books! As children get older, they become aware that we read words on a page, and that letters make different sounds.



Here are some of the underlying sound awareness skills that children learn to assist with reading and spelling:

- Show an interest and enjoy looking at books
- Count out the beats in words (syllables)
- Rhyming
- Knowing the sounds that letters make (eg. the letter 'S' says 'sssss')
- Identify the first sound in a word (eg. 'rabbit' says with the 'rrr' sound)

Reading books is a great way to expose your child to early literacy. For infants and toddlers, choose books with lift the flaps, different textures to 'feel' and brightly coloured pictures. It doesn't matter if you don't read all the words, you can just talk with your child about the pictures. Your child will get the most out of reading books if you can make it into a conversation, rather than the adult doing all the talking. Nursery rhymes are also fun to do and begin to help your child learn about how words rhyme.

For older children from 3 years of age, you can use everyday activities to increase your child's awareness of literacy. For example, point out the signs when you're out driving, show them the writing on the cereal box, explain to them that you are writing a shopping list and give them opportunities to practice writing their name and other letters. Go to the local library and let your child pick out different books to take home.

If you're concerned about your child's speech, language or early literacy development, contact a speech pathologist to discuss whether assessment for your child is indicated.

What can I do to help?

Here are some activities to develop early literacy skills:

- Play "I Spy...." by finding something with a specific letter or sound eg. I spy something that starts with the 'd' sound... it's a dog!
- Clap out the beats in a person's name eg. *Mummy* has 2 beats
- Read books with rhyming words or say nursery rhymes. You could come up with your own 'silly' rhymes. Eg. *wall, tall, 'lall'* rhyme with '*ball*'
- Find words that start with the same sound eg. *table, ten, truck* all start with the 't' sound
- Cut out pictures from advertising and sort them into pictures that start with the same sound
- Talk about whether words are long or short eg. *caterpillar* is a long word and *book* is a short word. Clap out the syllables in the words to help you.



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