



Language and Literacy

How Do Preschool Children Use Language, Strengthen Communication Skills, and Build Literacy Knowledge?

Preschool children begin developing competencies as listeners, communicators, readers, and writers. Early literacy skills include children's developing concepts of print, comprehension of age-appropriate text with rich vocabulary, phonological awareness, and letter recognition and are strengthened by integrated literacy-rich experiences in active learning environments. Research has identified early language and literacy skills that are important predictors for children's school readiness, and their later literacy learning (National Early Literacy Panel, 2008). Early care and education providers can support the development of emergent literacy skills by joyfully engaging in conversations with children as they express themselves as well as exploring books and stories together, playing with, and attending to sounds in spoken language, and experimenting with writing. "Children learn about literacy through daily exposure to the sounds and symbols of print during authentic and playful experiences with reading and writing" (Wheatley, Cantor, and Carver, 2015, p. 17).

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Language and Communication: conversations and turn-taking; receptive and expressive language; vocabulary development; and comprehension

Phonological Awareness: spoken language; attend to sounds; syllables; initial sounds; onsets and rimes; and rhyming

Print Awareness: print organization; and alphabet knowledge

Emergent Writing: mark-making; drawing; symbols; writing to convey meaning; and writing tool grasp



Tools and Resources

[Reading Tips for Families](#)

[Edutopia: Play-Based Activities That Build Reading Readiness](#)

[Center for Early Literacy Learning: Practice Guides for Practitioners](#)

[International Literacy Association: What Effective Pre-K Literacy Instruction Looks Like](#)

[Cox Campus Emergent Literacy Training](#)

[NAEYC: Promoting Preschoolers' Emergent Writing](#)

[Head Start ECLKC: Language and Literacy Effective Practice Guides](#)

[Reading Rockets: Phonological and Phonemic Awareness: Activities for Your Pre-K Child](#)

[Psychology Today: 5 Science-Based Tips for Promoting Literacy in Preschool](#)

Examples of Integrated Learning

How children may exhibit these skills	How early care and education providers can encourage these skills
Engage in meaningful conversations with adults and peers about topics of interest during meals/snacks, play time, small group times, etc. For example, ask questions, listen to others, and take turns talking.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Model dynamic patterns of conversation and support turn-taking, listening to others, asking open-ended questions, and responding appropriately. Engage in meaningful conversations with children throughout the day.▪ Promote and participate in discussions of many points of view and perspectives and of critical and divergent thinking. <i>Example:</i> “I noticed you included some rain forest and arctic animals in your story scene; tell me more about that.”▪ Play with and attend to sounds in spoken language through a variety of games, songs, finger-plays, poems, tongue twisters and stories. <i>Example:</i> “Who can think of a word that rhymes with bat and cat? That’s right, hat rhymes with bat and cat. Those words sound the same!”
Respond during shared reading of familiar books, poems, chants, songs, nursery rhymes or other texts. Show interest in a wide range of literacy-based experiences including books.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Participate in a variety of language and literacy-based experiences every day and model appreciation and enthusiasm for these experiences. For example, read books, tell, and re-tell stories using props and puppets, sing songs, recite nursery rhymes, and finger-plays, listen to poems, etc.▪ Engage children in meaningful conversations about books during interactive reading. Label, explain, describe, and ask open-ended questions during the story. Ask children to make predictions and notice interesting vocabulary. Point to and talk about print <i>Example:</i> “I see the word zebra in this story. Say the word zebra while I trace my finger slowly under the word. Zebra starts with the letter z and sounds like /z/. That’s right, Zara’s name starts like /z/!”▪ Provide a wide variety of materials and props and many opportunities for children to demonstrate and represent their understanding of text. For example, story-telling puppets, flannel boards, drawing, sculpting, oral expression, dramatization, etc.
Writing in a variety of contexts, such as drawing a picture and dictating a story about it, creating a grocery list in dramatic play, writing name on a post-it-note, making a card for a friend, book making, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Provide a wide range of writing materials in all areas of the classroom, such as order pads in dramatic play, paper for making signs in construction area, post-it-notes in math center, etc. Encourage children to write during play; facilitate writing for a variety of purposes throughout the day.▪ Model writing during authentic classroom activities. For example, write a list of ingredients for a cooking experiment, write a morning message, write a note to parent, add information to the calendar using post-it-notes, etc.▪ Encourage children to express their ideas by creating books or detailed drawings with dictated labels or stories on a variety of topics of particular interest, including relating personal experiences or events. Celebrate children’s writing and make it public!

Books to Promote and Enhance Language and Literacy Development

Language

Brown Bear, Brown Bear What Do You See?
by Bill Martin Jr.

Five Little Monkeys Jumping on the Bed
by Eileen Christelow

Goodnight Moon by Margaret Wise Brown

I Don't Care! Said the Bear by Colin West

Is Your Mama a Llama
by Deborah Guarino and Steven Kellogg

Little Blue Truck by Alice Schertle

Silly Sally by Audrey Wood

The Doorbell Rang by Pat Hutchins

We're Going on a Bear Hunt by Michael Rosen

Rhyming

Cock-A-Doodle-Moo by Bernard Most

I Aint Gonna Paint No More by Karen Beaumont

Llama Llama Red Pajama by Anne Dewdney

Look by Fiona Woodcock

Rhyming Dust Bunnies by Jan Thomas

Rhymocerous by Janik Coat

Runny Babbit by Shel Silverstein

See You Later, Alligator by Sally Hopgood

Sheep in a Jeep by Nancy Shaw

Tanka Tanka Skunk by Steve Webb

The Word Collector by Peter H. Reynolds

Whose Knees Are These by Jabari Asim

Alphabet Knowledge

Alphabet City by Stephen T. Johnson

Alphabet Mystery and Alphabet Rescue
by Audrey Wood

Alphabet Under Construction by Denise Flemming

Chicka Chicka Boom Boom by Bill Martin Jr.

Creature ABC by Andrew Zuckerman

Firefighters ABC by Chris Demarest

LMNO Peas by Keith Baker

T is for TuTu by Kurt Browning

The Alphabet Tree by Leo Leoni

The Ocean Alphabet by Jerry Pallotta

The Three Bears ABC by Grace Maccarone

Interactive Reading

Bunny Slopes by Claudia Rueda

Dear Zoo by Rod Campbell

Don't Wake the Dragon by Bianca Schulze

From Head to Toe by Eric Carle

Hey-ho, to Mars We'll Go by Susan Lendroth

Ice Cream and Dinosaurs by Eric Litman

Noisy Night by Mac Barnett

Ocean by Heather Alexander

Tap the Magic Tree by Christie Matheson

The Street Beneath My Feet
by Charlotte Guillain

We All Play by Julie Flett

What If... by Samantha Berger