



## 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).

### Language and Literacy

**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
<p>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.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 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.</li> <li>▪ 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.”</li> <li>▪ 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!”</li> </ul>
<p>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.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 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.</li> <li>▪ 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 <i>zebra</i> in this story. Say the word <i>zebra</i> while I trace my finger slowly under the word. <i>Zebra</i> starts with the letter z and sounds like /z/. That’s right, Zara’s name starts like /z/!”</li> <li>▪ 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.</li> </ul>
<p>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.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 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.</li> <li>▪ 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.</li> <li>▪ 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!</li> </ul>

## 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 Eillen 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

### 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

### 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

*Rhymoceros* 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

### 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