



Learning About Letters and Words

Your child was born to learn! From birth, your infant sees pictures, symbols, letters and words all around. As he grows, he begins to recognize more pictures, then symbols, then letters and words. He will learn to identify letters, the sounds that they make, and then familiar words. He will notice that letters combine to make words, like the letters in his name. He will understand that words on a page have spaces between them and tell a message. These language and literacy skills will help your child become a good reader and writer.

You are your child's first and best teacher. You can help her to learn about letters and words. Every day moments are learning moments! Try these easy and fun activities with your child:

YOUR INFANT:

- Let your baby play with alphabet blocks that are large and safe for infants. She will begin to see the different letter shapes.
- Sing the "alphabet song" to your infant. It's never too early!
- Read to your infant every day. Cuddle up with books. Let him hold and touch books. Name and point to pictures.

YOUR TODDLER:

- Sing the "alphabet song" with your child. This is how most children start to learn about letters.
- Read alphabet books to your toddler. Look for fun ones that the public library!
- Your child needs lots of play time to learn the letters. Large magnetic and foam letters are great toys for your child. Use them on the refrigerator or in the bathtub. Make a game out of finding the letters in your child's name.
- Let your child use paper and pencils, crayons, or paints. Help him write his name, if he shows interest. Praise anything he writes, no matter what it looks like!

YOUR PRESCHOOLER:

- Let your child play with magnetic or foam letters. He may sort them, line them up, or talk about them. Help him to notice the rounded parts, straight edges, and holes in the different letters. Ask him if he knows the names of any of the letters. Help him find the ones he knows.
- Put letters in alphabetical order and sing the alphabet song.
- Read books that have letters in them, such as *Chicka Chicka Boom Boom*. Find letters and talk about them. Have him try to match magnetic letters to the letters in the book.
- Give your child the newspaper or a magazine. Let him look for letters that he knows.
- Help your child to use letters to "spell out" names of people and things he knows.
- Point out letters and print in your child's world. Look for letters at the grocery store, on the bus, on street signs, and on cereal boxes. Some letters might be the same ones as the letters in your child's name!
- Your child may enjoy art activities where he can make letters. Provide time to make letters with play dough, popsicle sticks, or even shaving cream!