

your child was born to be a reader!

building language skills

Learning to read and write begins at birth. As a parent, you can help your child build language and literacy skills. This will help your child be ready for school.



Language skills are a child's listening and speaking skills.

Your child needs many opportunities to build her language skills before starting school. Your child's ability to speak and understand language is the first step in learning to read.

Why are language skills important to your child's success in school?

If your child starts school with strong language skills, she will:

- Have a good oral vocabulary (words she uses in speaking or understands in listening);
- Understand directions and lessons better;
- Ask and answer questions about stories read together in class;
- Enjoy talking with classmates and teachers; and
- Learn to read words more easily.

You can help build your child's language skills by:

- Singing to your child;
- Imitating your child's babbles and talk;
- Talking with your child;
- Encouraging your child to talk; and
- Helping your child express her wants and needs with words.

The activities on the back of this card give ways to help your child build language skills from the time she is a baby through the preschool years.

building language skills

Your Infant

Play labeling games with your baby. For example ask your child to "show me your eyes, ...your nose, ...your mouth." At first, help him point to the body part. After you have played this game with your child many times, have him point to the body part.

During bath time, diapering, and dressing talk to your child. Label what you are doing. Name her clothing and bath toys. Talk about what you are doing when you wash her hands or tell her what she is eating for dinner. For example, say, "This is your bottle. I am going to feed you," or "Let's wash your hands with water and soap. Water is wet!"

Your Toddler

Take an "exploring walk" with your toddler. Ask questions about what you see. For example, ask: "What color is the grass?"

Play listening games such as "Simon Says" with your child. Keep it simple. For example, state "Simon says, touch your ears."

Pretend play is a great way to develop oral language. For example, you can have pretend tea parties or pretend to drive to the store with toy cars.

Make sharing books a part of every day. Have fun with the story! Try to make up voices for the characters or act out parts of the story together. Talk about the story with your child.

Your Preschooler

Play listening games, such as "Simon Says" with your child and use 2-3 step directions. For example, state: "Simon says, put your hand on your heart, and hop up and down."

Start to discuss and plan things you will do together. For example, if you will be visiting the zoo, plan what to wear, discuss what you will see and what you will eat for lunch.

Read to your
child every day!
Talk about the
stories together.
Take books with
you whenever
you go places.

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learning **about books and print**



Learning to read and write begins at birth. As a parent, you can help your child build language and literacy skills. This will help your child be ready for school.

Young children need many opportunities to learn about books and print.

It is important for children to have books in the home and to see their parents reading. If your child sees you reading books, magazines, or newspapers, he will want to read, too!

Before starting school, your child should know how to hold a book and turn the pages one by one. He should be able to recognize a favorite book by its cover. He should know that the cover of a book shows the title name of the book and a picture of what it will be about. He should also know that the print (the letters or words on the page) is what you are reading.

Why is learning about books and print important to your child's success in school?

If your child starts school knowing about books and print, he will:

- Understand that print has meaning;
- Be excited about books; and
- Be eager to learn to read!

You can help your child learn about books and print by:

- Reading to your child;
- Letting your child touch and hold books;
- Letting your child choose books to read (even if it is the same one over and over); and
- Encouraging your child to pretend to read books.

The activities on the back of this card give ways to help your child learn about books and print from the time he is a baby through the preschool years.

learning about books and print

Your Infant

Begin reading to your baby as soon as she can sit on your lap! Choose simple board books with colorful pictures. Point to the pictures and talk about them. Let your child touch and hold the books. Show your baby how to point to pictures and touch them—name and talk about pictures in the book as she touches them.

Your Toddler

Share books a part of every day. Have fun with the story! Try to make up voices for the characters or act out parts of the story together. Talk about the story with your child.

Turn the pages slowly when you read to your child. Let your child turn them if he seems to want to. "Touch and feel" books and pop-up books are fun for your toddler. Plastic books are great for reading at bath time.

When you read to your toddler, take time to look at the cover of the book together. Soon your child will recognize favorite books by their covers.

Choose books with parts that repeat. Ask your child to join in with you when you read them. For example, read the book *The Three Little Pigs* to your child. When the wolf says, "I'll huff and I'll puff," ask your child to complete the phrase, "and I'll blow your house down." At first you may need to help your child do this.

Your Preschooler

When reading to your child, look at the cover of the book together. Point out the title and the author of the book. Look at the picture on the cover, and ask your child what she thinks the book will be about.

As you share books with your child, talk about the pictures and how they connect with the story. Point to the words when you read, so your child knows the story is coming from the print.

Begin to point out print in your child's world. For example, at breakfast, place the Cheerios box on the table and say, "Here is your favorite cereal, Cheerios!" Point out the name on the box. When driving or out for a walk, point out stop signs and say, "We need to stop when we see a stop sign."

Make sharing books an activity every day.

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developing **comprehension**

Learning to read and write begins at birth. As a parent, you can help your child build language and literacy skills. This will help your child be ready for school.



Comprehension is a child's ability to understand stories and books.

Before starting school, your child needs many opportunities to listen to books, talk about them, and link the characters, events, and information to what she already knows. This will help develop reading comprehension.

Why is comprehension important to your child's success in school?

If your child has had many opportunities to develop comprehension before starting school, she will:

- Understand the stories and books the teacher shares;
- Have an understanding of the way stories are put together;
- Listen for a sequence (or order) of events;
- Want to know what happens next; and
- Be excited about the idea that she can learn from books!

You can help develop your child's comprehension by:

- Setting aside time everyday to read;
- Reading many different types of books to your child, including books about her interests (books about animals, books about insects, etc.);
- Asking questions during the story; and
- Talking with your child about what you read together. Help her link the characters, events, and information to her life and what she knows.

The activities on the back of this card give ways to help your child develop comprehension skills from the time she is a baby through the preschool years.

developing **comprehensive**

Your Infant

Read to your child everyday! Choose simple board books with colorful pictures. Point to the pictures, and talk about them. Let your child touch and hold the books. Look for board books about babies, animals, toys, etc. Your baby will love books about real things he sees every day! You can find these books at your public library.

Your Toddler

Read your child's favorite books over and over again. Let him tell you about a page or two of a story he has heard many times before.

When you read to your toddler, ask a couple of simple questions about the story. Take time to answer any questions your child may ask.

Ask your child to tell you about the things he does. Help him put events in order. For example, after a trip to the zoo, ask: "What did you see first at the zoo? Then what did you see?"

Help your child find books about whatever interests him. The public library is a great place to look! For example, he may like trucks or bugs. He will enjoy looking at books about trucks or bugs that have real pictures of them.

Your Preschooler

When you read to your child, stop at times to ask, "What do you think is going to happen?" Talk about the story and how it connects to her life. For example, if reading a book about teddy bears, you may tell your child, "You love your teddy, just like the little boy in the book!"

After sharing a story with your child, ask him to draw a picture of his favorite part. Let him tell you about his picture, and write what he says under it. Hang it up on the refrigerator for all to see!

Let your child use puppets to practice retelling a familiar story! He will have fun making simple puppets from paper bags, socks, etc.

Help your child find books or magazines about his interests.

Read to your
child everyday!

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learning **about letters**

Learning to read and write begins at birth. As a parent, you can help your child build language and literacy skills. This will help your child be ready for school.



Knowing the letters of the alphabet is an important step in learning to read.

Before starting school, your child needs to explore letter shapes and experiment with writing.

Why is learning about letters important to your child's success in school?

If your child knows and can write some of the letters of the alphabet before starting school, he will:

- Catch on to the idea that words are made up of letters;
- Understand that writing is a way to share ideas with others; and
- Be eager to learn how to read and write!

You can help your child learn about letters by:

- Reading alphabet books and singing the alphabet song;
- Showing your child the letters in his name;
- Giving your child letters to play with when he is old enough to do so safely (alphabet blocks, magnetic letters, and foam letters are great toys for your child); and
- Letting your child experiment with writing. Let her use paper and crayons. Praise everything she writes!

The activities on the back of this card give ways to help your child learn about letters from the time he is a baby through the preschool years.

learning **about letters**

During pretend play, encourage your child to write.

Your Infant

Alphabet blocks are fun for your baby to play with, and she will begin to see the different letter shapes.

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 at the public library!

Your child needs lots of playtime 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

Make an alphabet book with your child! Encourage her to write or draw pictures for every letter of the alphabet.

Continue to give your child magnetic and/or foam letters to play with. You can make a game out of matching upper and lower case letters.

Set up a writing area for your child. Include paper in different sizes and colors, markers, pencils, and crayons. Write notes to your child, and encourage her to “write back” to you. Praise everything she tries to write!

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!

During pretend play, encourage your child to write. Offer your child crayons, pencils, and paper to take your order while playing waitress or create a shopping list while playing house.

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learning **about sounds in words**



Learning to read and write begins at birth. As a parent, you can help your child build language and literacy skills. This will help your child be ready for school.

Before starting school, children should be able to think about how words sound, apart from what they mean.

Learning to pay attention to the sounds in words is an important first step toward understanding that letters stand for sounds.

Examples of being able to think about the sounds in words:

- Knowing that the word "cat" rhymes with "bat"
- Knowing that the word "apple" has two spoken parts or syllables ("ap" and "pull")
- Knowing that the words "dog" and "dig" begin with the same sound

Why is learning about sounds in words important to your child's success in school?

If your child has had many opportunities to think about the sounds in words before starting school, she will:

- Understand when the teacher begins *phonics instruction*. (This means linking sounds and letters); and
- Have an easier time learning to read!

You can help your child learn about the sounds in words by:

- Having fun with language! Nursery rhymes, poetry, and songs are perfect for helping your child learn to pay attention to the sounds in words; and
- Sharing books that play with language (Dr. Seuss, for example).

The activities on the back of this card give many ways to help your child learn about the sounds in words from the time she is a baby through the preschool years.

learning about sounds in words

Sing songs and share rhymes with your child.

Your Infant

Sing to your child. (Don't worry; your baby will love your voice!) Some favorite songs include the "Itsy Bitsy Spider" or "Patty Cake." You can even make up words to your favorite songs.

Your Toddler

Sing or tell your child nursery rhymes, such as "Jack and Jill" and "Humpty Dumpty." Once your child knows the rhyme, pause to let her "finish" a line. For example, start singing, "Jack and Jill went up the" and pause. Have your child answer "hill."

Sing songs and share rhymes with your child. Music and movement make it fun! Tapes or CDs of children's songs are great for the car. You can find these free of charge at your public library!

Your Preschooler

Play games with the beginning sounds in words. For example, play "I Spy." Say, "I spy something that starts with the letter b. It is a yellow fruit. What is it?" The first few times you may need to help your child with the answer. In this case, help your child answer, "banana."

Play games that stretch out the sounds in words. Say a word slowly, in parts, and ask your child to put the parts together to guess the word. For example, say the words "Cup" and "cake" to your child. Then ask your child to tell you what the word is. Your child should answer, "Cupcake!"

Listen to and sing songs that play with the sounds in words. Have fun and make up your own silly words together! Play "The Name Game." For example, if your child's name is Nate, sing with your child, "Nate, Nate bo bate, banana fana fo fate, fee fi fo mate, Nate!" Try many different names.

Read aloud books that rhyme and play with the sounds in words. Dr. Seuss books are a great choice! Poetry and nursery rhymes are also fun for your preschooler. Look for these books at your public library!

your child was born to be a reader!

Maryland public libraries can help your child become a reader!

Learning to read and write begins at birth. As a parent, you can help your child build language and literacy skills. This will help your child be ready for school.



Have you and your child visited your local library recently?

Visiting the library can help your child develop an early love of books and reading.

Most libraries have a special area for children with board books, magazines, music and activities! Librarians enjoy helping you and your child choose just the right book!

Did you know that the Maryland's Public Libraries have:

- Child-friendly space;
- Books, magazines, music and more;
- Free storytimes that make sharing stories, music and poems fun;
- Workshops and other activities for families and children of all ages.
- A place to meet old friends and new; and
- Librarians to help pick books and offer suggestions for making reading fun!

Be sure to get your child a library card today! Pick up a calendar of events from your local library! Make visiting the library a family habit!

Visit www.sailor.lib.md.us for more information on the Maryland Public Libraries or to find your local library.

great books for your child!

Look for Books by these Authors

Janet & Allan Ahlberg
Kathy Appelt
Byron Barton
Sandra Boynton
Marc Brown
Margaret Wise Brown
Rod Campbell
Eric Carle
Lucy Cousins
Donald Crews
Tomi dePaola
Jane Dyer
Ian Falconer
Eloise Greenfield
Gail Gibbons
Juanita Havill
Kevin Henkes
Eric Hill
Tana Hoban
Pat Hutchins
Ann Jonas
Ezra Jack Keats
Jonathan London
Jean Marzollo
Robert McCloskey
Margaret Miller
Laura Numeroff
Jan Omerod
Helen Oxenbury
Peggy Rathman
Eve Rice
Pam Munoz Ryan
Nancy Shaw
Shigeo Watanabe
Rosemary Wells
Vera Williams
Ed Young
and
Mother Goose

Children and families enjoy the books and authors listed below.

Your local public librarian will be glad to help you find these books and other materials to read with your child.

Your Infant

Infants enjoy board books and books with babies, large clear objects and rhymes. Try reading the following with your child:

- *Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?* by Bill Martin
- *First Words* by Ed Emberly
- *Goodnight Moon* by Margaret Wise Brown
- *Pat the Bunny* by Dorothy Kunhardt
- *Where's Spot?* by Eric Hill

Your Toddler

Stories about the world they know (families, pets) and family outings (trips to the zoo, birthday parties, markets) are great for toddlers. Also look for books about real things. Try reading the following books with your child:

- *Dressing* (and other titles) by Helen Oxenbury
- *Max's New Suit* (and other titles) by Rosemary Wells
- *Opposites* (and other titles) by Sandra Boynton
- *Spot's Birthday Party* by Eric Hill
- *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* by Eric Carle
- *Wheels on the Bus* by Maryann Kovalsk

Your Preschooler

Look for stories about the larger world your preschool is beginning to know – school, space, other cultures, and problem solving. Try the following books:

- *Are You My Mother?* by P.D. Eastman
- *Chica Chica Boom Boom* by Bill Martin Jr. and Lois Ehlert
- *The Grumpy Morning* by Pamela Edwards
- *Lyle, Lyle Crocodile* by Bernard Waber
- *Snowy Day* by Ezra Jack Keats
- *Sylvester and the Magic Pebble* by William Steig
- *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* by Beatrix Potter
- *Where the Wild Things Are* by Maurice Sendak

Your child needs many opportunities to build her language skills before