

# Bring words into your child's everyday play

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## PARENTING POINTS

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Children develop the ability to listen and understand what is being said to them. They also learn how to communicate with others. There are many things you can do to support your child's oral development.

- Read to her aloud regularly! Choose interesting stories, poems, magazines, and other forms of fiction and nonfiction. Read favourites repeatedly. Discuss and describe new words to help expand your child's vocabulary and knowledge of the world.

- Explore your neighbourhood to expose your child to new life experiences and language.

Look for people who can share their experiences and knowledge with your child. Also think of the places you can visit for field trips.

- Make up language guessing games. Ask children to name the “mystery fruit” for dessert: “It is round and juicy, and it has a peel.” These types of games are easy to do while driving in the car or waiting for an appointment.

### Print Awareness

Children develop knowledge of how the print system works; directionality (left to right, top to bottom); that print can take the form of letters, words, and sentences; and that print has meaning. You can help your child discover how print works and what it is used for:

- Be word explorers. Invite your child to look for print in their world, from street signs to cereal boxes. Look at the words they find and read them together.

- Mix print and play! Bring signs, shopping lists, menus pads for taking orders, and other print and writing materials into your child's play activities. Join into their dramatic play to show them

ways to use these props to learn about print.

### Phonological Awareness

Children gain an awareness of the individual sounds that make up words. Children who play with beginning and ending sounds, break words into individual speech sounds, and make up nonsense words are developing their phonological awareness. Being able to identify sounds in words helps children when they start to read and must make connections between these sounds and the letters that represent them. To help your child notice the sounds of language:

- Play rhyming games: “I spy, something that rhymes with gate.” (Your child finds the plate.)

- Focus on beginning letter sounds with nursery rhymes like, “Peter Piper.” Play word games like, “Look around, what begins with a “rrr” sound?” Sing silly songs with

made up rhyming words.

- Chant and clap out syllable patterns in children's names, foods, and other words.

### Alphabet Knowledge and Writing

Children begin to realize that print is used to communicate and that drawings are different than print. They become interested in naming and writing letters of the alphabet. Early writing efforts that look like scribbles may lead to scribbled print, the formation of letters, invented spelling, and conventional writing. You can help your child recognize and write letters of the alphabet:

- Explore alphabet puzzles, blocks, and magnetic letters.

- Support children as “message makers.” Set up a writing box or drawer stocked with a variety of drawing materials, writing tools, name and word cards, and picture dictionaries so your child can create mail, notes, books, and other forms of print.

Frequent conversations throughout the day, reading stories, songs, discussions, play, rhymes, and riddles can turn “waiting times” into great times! Use these ideas to help your child learn about his or her world and develop an excitement about reading and writing.

» Reference: *Growing Ideas: Word Play All Day — Early Literacy in Action.* University of Maine Extension

How can we be sure our children are ready for school? Research indicates that the literacy knowledge children have when they enter school is an important predictor of their reading and academic success.

From infancy, children begin to develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes that influence lifelong reading and writing behaviours. This stage of literacy development occurring before children are able to read and write is called early literacy. These early literacy experiences help children discover the purposes and relationships between speech and print.

Learning and practicing early literacy skills can and should be fun. When children and adults read stories, sing songs, have rich conversations, and engage in games, play, and literacy activities together, relationships and a positive feeling toward literacy development. It is important to expose your child to the following areas of early literacy:

### Oral Language