

## What is Early Literacy?

Early literacy is what children know about reading and writing before they can actually read and write.

Research shows that children get ready to read years before they start school. You can help your two- and three-year-old learn important skills now so they can become good readers.

## Why parents are so important in helping their children get ready to read:

- ❖ You know your children best.
- ❖ Children learn best when they are in a good mood, and you know their moods best.
- ❖ You can help your children learn reading skills in ways that are easiest for them.
- ❖ Children learn best by doing things—and they love doing things with you. Take every chance you have to read with your children, tell and talk about stories, say nursery rhymes and sing songs.

Ask your public library for the names of books to read to two- and three-year-olds. Ask about library programs that you and your child can enjoy together.



## Early Literacy Begins With You

You can help your child be ready to read

**EVERY  
CHILD  
READY  
TO READ®**

@ your library®

**Parent Guide to Early Literacy  
for Talkers:  
Two- and Three-Year-Olds**

THE EARLY LITERACY INITIATIVE  
A PARTNERSHIP AMONG THE PUBLIC LIBRARY ASSOCIATION,  
THE ASSOCIATION FOR LIBRARY SERVICE TO CHILDREN, AND  
THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF CHILD HEALTH & HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

*This information created by Dr. Grover (Russ) Whitehurst, Leading Professor of Psychology, State University of New York and Dr. Christopher Lonigan, Associate Professor of Psychology, Florida State University. Funding provided by the Public Library Association (PLA) and the Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC), divisions of the American Library Association. Spring 2001*

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## Six Pre-Reading Skills your child can start learning from birth!

### Narrative Skills

Being able to describe things and events and tell stories.



### Print Motivation

Being interested in and enjoying books.



## What You Do Helps Your Child Get Ready To Read

**Vocabulary**  
Knowing the name of things.



**Phonological Awareness**  
Being able to hear and play with the smaller sounds in words.

**Letter Knowledge**  
Knowing letters are different from each other, knowing their names and sounds and recognizing letters everywhere.

**Print Awareness**  
Noticing print, knowing how to handle a book and knowing how to follow the words on a page.



According to research, there are six pre-reading skills that children must learn in order to learn to read.

Activities you do to support each of these skills will change as your child grows.



Every Child Ready to Read @ your library is a project of the Public Library Association and the Association for Library Service to Children, divisions of the American Library Association.  
[www.pla.org](http://www.pla.org)  
[www.ala.org/alsc](http://www.ala.org/alsc)



Every Child Ready To Read @ your library  
[www.pla.org/earlyliteracy.htm](http://www.pla.org/earlyliteracy.htm)

# WHAT CAN I DO TO HELP?

**“The single most important activity for building the knowledge required for eventual success in reading is reading aloud to children. This is especially so during the preschool years.”**

From *Becoming a Nation of Readers*

## Vocabulary

- ✦ Talk with your child about what is going on around you. Talk about feelings—yours and your child’s.
- ✦ When your child talks with you, add more detail to what she says.
- ✦ Speak in the language that is most comfortable for you.
- ✦ Read together every day. When you talk about the story and pictures, your child hears and learns more words.
- ✦ **Research shows that children who have larger vocabularies are better readers. Knowing many words helps children recognize written words and understand what they read.**

**“Vocabulary is learned from books more than from normal conversation with adults or children or from television exposure.”**

From *Meaningful Differences in the Everyday Experience of Young American Children*  
by B. Hart and T.R. Risley.

## Print Motivation

- ✦ Make book-sharing time a special time for closeness between you and your child.
- ✦ Let your child see you reading.
- ✦ Visit your public library often.
- ✦ Children who enjoy books will want to learn how to read.

## Print Awareness

- ✦ Read aloud everyday print—labels, signs, lists, menus. Print is everywhere!
- ✦ Point to some of the words as you say them, especially words that are repeated.
- ✦ Let your child turn the pages.
- ✦ Let your child hold the book and read or tell the story.
- ✦ Hold the book upside down. See if your child turns the book around.
- ✦ **Being familiar with printed language help children feel comfortable with books and understand that print is useful.**

## Narrative Skills

- ✦ Tell your child stories.
- ✦ Ask your child to tell you about something that happened today.
- ✦ Read books together. Stories help children understand that things happen in order first, next, last.
- ✦ Read a book that you have read before. Switch what you do—you be the listener and let your child tell you the story.
- ✦ **Being able to tell or retell a story helps children understand what they read.**

## Phonological Awareness

- ✦ Say nursery rhymes and make up your own silly, nonsense rhymes.
- ✦ Sing songs. Songs have different notes for each syllable in a word, so children can hear the different sounds in words.
- ✦ Play word games such as, “What sounds like ‘ran’?” or “What starts with the same sound as ‘ball’?”
- ✦ Say rhymes and sing songs in the language that is most comfortable for you.
- ✦ **Being able to hear the sounds that make up words helps children sound out words as they begin to read.**

## Letter Knowledge

- ✦ Help your child see different shapes and the shapes of letters.
- ✦ Talk about what is the same and what is different between two things.
- ✦ Write your child’s name, especially the first letter.
- ✦ Make letters from clay or use magnetic letters. Point out and name letters when reading alphabet books, signs or labels.
- ✦ Read alphabet books with clear letters and pictures.
- ✦ **Knowing the names and sounds of letters helps children figure out how to sound out words.**



## Dialogic or “Hear and Say” Reading

**How** you read to children makes a difference in *how ready they are to learn to read.*

### Use dialogic reading to teach new words.

- ✦ Choose a book that your child already knows well.
- ✦ Ask “what” questions. (“What’s this?” and point to a picture.)
- ✦ Follow your child’s answers with another question. (“What is the dog doing?” Child: “Digging.”)
- ✦ Repeat what your child says and expand on it. (“I think you’re right. The dog is digging under the fence to go find his friend.”)
- ✦ Help your child as needed. Praise and encourage your child.
- ✦ Follow your child’s interests.

### Have fun!

### Use dialogic reading to develop comprehension skills.

- ✦ Dialogic reading encourages your two- and three-year-old to think and talk by answering open-ended questions.
- ✦ Ask questions like: “What’s going on here?” “Tell me what you see on this page.”
- ✦ Follow your child’s answer with another question: “What else do you see?” “What is happening over here?”
- ✦ Expand what your child says. Add another piece of information.
- ✦ Help your child repeat your longer phrases.

### Have fun!