

Language and Literacy for Babies

What is Emergent Literacy?

"Emergent literacy is what children need to know about reading and writing before they can learn to read and write." (Sulzby & Teale 1991)

Learning how to read is one of the most important journeys that children experience. Parents and caregivers play a vital role in their success. Emergent literacy isn't just reading—it includes writing, speaking, listening and all the ways we use language to interact and communicate with each other.

Five easy steps for sharing books with your baby

- **Pick the best time.** Choose a time when you and your baby are in a good mood and ready to enjoy each other
- **Show Baby the Book.** Point to the pictures and talk naturally and cheerfully.
- **Talk and have fun.** Remember to touch and love your baby the whole time.
- **Watch what Baby does.** Let your baby play with the book if he wants to and stop for now if he gets upset.
- **Share a book with Baby everyday.** Even just a few minutes a day is important.



"Parents and caregivers play an important role in your child's language and emerging literacy skills. Children who are read to from an early age show that they develop a larger vocabulary and better language skills when they start school." (Teale 1986)

Parents and caregivers play an important role helping your baby develop language and emergent literacy skills. One of the most important things you can do is talk to your baby. Just talk!



Babies learn to communicate from birth, making their needs known through body language, crying, cooing and babbling. Gradually these sounds are used in a variety of ways and times.

Play with your baby, talk to them, build on what interest them .

Read simple books with them and name and point to pictures. Wait for your baby to respond and build on any communication attempts.

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Fitting language and literacy skills into your day



- Talk to your child, build on what interest them.
- Read simple books; name and point to the pictures
- Choose books what will stand up to your baby's chewing, banging and throwing.
- Books with large simple pictures, cloth or vinyl pages, or board books are best.
- While on outings, point to signs or logos. Let them see you make grocery list or check the calendar so that they know reading is part of everyday life.
- Sing songs, say rhymes and play games like Pat-a-Cake and Peek-a-Boo. Your baby will enjoy them and begin to copy the patterns.

Why should you and your child read and play together?

- Because your child learns by watching you
- Because your child learns by doing things with you
- Because your child learns better with encouragement.

