

# Early Literacy Tips for Babies



**Ohio** | Department of Education

## At Home

- **Talking.** Talk to your baby as you go about your day even if he can't respond with words yet (e.g. "We are making spaghetti for dinner! Yum!"). Encourage, listen and respond to your baby's chatters and babbles as much as possible to boost language development.
- **Singing.** Sing your baby a lullaby when you tuck him in for the night or make up a song to greet him in the morning. Hearing music and songs helps your baby develop awareness of different sounds and exposes him to new vocabulary.
- **Reading.** Set aside time during your day to read with your baby. Point to pictures and talk about what you are seeing and reading. This will help your child learn how books work, understand that pictures represent real things and encourage a love of books and reading.
- **Writing.** As you play or eat meals together, help your baby develop the muscles in her hands by encouraging her to pick up crackers and cheerios, touch her nose and toes or grab and pick up toys. This will help her little hands get ready to turn pages and hold pencils and crayons.
- **Playing.** When you're playing with your baby, have fun using different noises for toys, like trucks, baby dolls or animals. Hearing different noises and experiencing various pitches, tones and volumes helps your baby develop the basics of language.

## On the Go

- **Talking.** Talk about what your child is doing wherever you are and describe what she is looking at, touching or playing with: "Do you see the kitty? She looks soft." When you talk with your baby, she is hearing the sounds of the languages you speak and learning what words mean as you point to and label things. Babies babble using the sounds they have heard!
- **Singing.** Sing to your baby as you drive around town. Put your own spin on classic favorites like "The Wheels on the Bus" or "Itsy Bitsy Spider" to help introduce new vocabulary and word sounds.
- **Reading.** Forget to put a book in the diaper bag? No problem! Read whatever you see during your day to your child (street signs, grocery store labels or even posters at the doctor's office!) to improve your child's vocabulary when he starts talking.
- **Writing.** Let your child draw in soft substances, such as sandboxes at the park or yogurt at mealtime! Even this simple activity will help strengthen eye-hand coordination, which will help with writing later on.
- **Playing.** A simple game of peek-a-boo while grocery shopping can have a big impact. Playing helps babies become aware of their bodies, increases curiosity, develops a sense of humor and creates brain connections for future learning.

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

You are your child's first teacher and preparing him or her to read can be easy and fun - whether you're at home or on the go!

Five of the best ways to prepare your child to read are talking, singing, reading, writing and playing.



# Early Literacy Tips for Toddlers

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## At Home

- **Talking.** Expand on the things your child says. For example, if your child points out a flower, respond with: "Yes, that is a flower. That kind of flower is called a rose. Roses can be red, yellow, white or pink."
- **Singing.** Clap along to rhythms when you sing or listen to a song. This helps children hear the syllables in words and helps develop motor skills.
- **Reading.** Stop before a predictable word or line in a book and ask the child to chime in (this works especially well with rhyming books or those with repetitive text) to help them make new words from words they already know.
- **Writing.** Fine motor skill activities, such as doing puzzles or crumpling paper, help strengthen the muscles in your child's hand which prepares him to properly hold pencils, crayons and markers.
- **Playing.** Play a game of pretend with your child - the sillier, the better! Pretend play helps your child understand the power of language.

## On the Go

- **Talking.** Point out signs, labels and logos as you and your toddler drive or go about your day. Talk about what different signs represent to help make your child aware of words and symbols all around them.
- **Singing.** Change the words in a familiar song to make something new. Instead of "Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star," sing about a quiet star or a great big star. Use your voice to help illustrate the new adjective: sing about the quiet star in a quiet voice or the great big star in a very loud voice.
- **Reading.** Relate the things that you are doing as you spend the day together to things that happen in your child's favorite books. "We're going to the zoo just like Maisy did in the book you like. What did Maisy do at the zoo? Should we do that, too?"
- **Writing.** See if you can find the first letter of your child's name on a street sign or at the store ("This is broccoli. It starts with the letter B, just like your name: Brittany! What else can we find that starts with the letter B?")
- **Playing.** Play a game of "Can you...?" by asking a series of questions like, "Can you jump really high?" or "Can you find something red?" Playing games like this is fun and easy when you're on the go - and helps improve concentration, attention span and memory.



# Early Literacy

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## Tips for Preschoolers

### At Home

- **Talking.** As you are preparing a meal, invite your child to help. Talk about what you are doing, how you are doing it or the food you are preparing (name, color, texture, taste or where it comes from).
- **Singing.** Singing is a great way to learn new vocabulary and help children understand sentence structure by slowing the language down. Try to sing songs about everyday routines such as getting dressed, washing hands or making breakfast.
- **Reading.** Encourage your child to choose books she is interested in, even if you feel that the story is too long for her attention span or bedtime. Try going on a "picture walk" through the story where you discuss what you see going on in the illustrations; you can even make up your own story about what is happening in the pictures you see.
- **Writing.** When coloring or scribbling, encourage your child to write as much as he can about what he is drawing. This will help him understand that written words stand for spoken language.
- **Playing.** Dress-up is a fun and inexpensive way to introduce your child to storytelling. Provide her with old clothes and other household props to help her act out favorite stories – or make up her own! Encourage her to think about how a story progresses through the beginning, middle and end.

### On the Go

- **Talking.** Engage your child in conversation while in the car. Talk about where you are headed, what you did last time you were there if it's a familiar place, or what new and exciting things you will do if it's somewhere your child has never been.
- **Singing.** Keep a CD or playlist of your child's favorite songs in the car. Sing along with them (or sing made-up songs!) to help your child hear syllables, word sounds and new vocabulary.
- **Reading.** Words are all around us! Point out letters or simple words that your child may recognize, such as ones that start with the same letter as his name or easy rhyming words.
- **Writing.** While waiting in line or at the doctor's office, do a simple finger play or rhyme that gets her hands moving, like "Itsy, Bitsy Spider" or "Open Them, Shut Them." Moving and stretching her fingers will help her build the fine motor skills she'll need to write and draw.
- **Playing.** Play a game of "I Spy" while in the car. Take this opportunity to work on building your child's vocabulary by picking things he may be unfamiliar with or by using very descriptive language to help him guess the item you see.

[worthingtonlibraries.org/kids/earlyliteracy](http://worthingtonlibraries.org/kids/earlyliteracy)

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