

Supporting Early Literacy in Natural Environments

- Activities for Caregivers and Infants and Toddlers
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What are these activities?

- These activities are for parents to help their children develop early language and literacy skills.
- These activities address awareness of books and print, sounds and rhymes, and use of language.
- Parents can use the activities during play and daily routines.

You can use these activities when:

- You and your child are together.
- Your child is happy.
- Your child is not hungry.
- Your child is not tired.
- The activity goes along with what your child is doing. (Your child is looking at a book. You can do an activity with a book.)
- Siblings and friends can join



Listening to music

Listen to music when your infant or toddler is:

- Playing.
- Falling asleep.
- Riding in the car.

Move to the music with your infant or toddler.





Listening to music

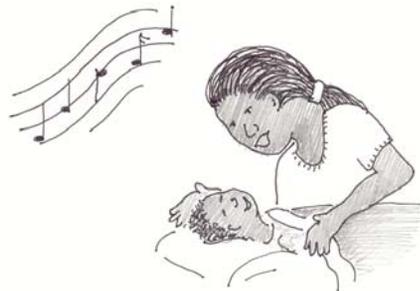


To help your infant or toddler succeed, you can:

- Have music your child really likes.
- Have music on when your child does his/her favorite things.
- Move with your child to the music.

To make this activity more challenging, you can:

- Play different kinds of music.
- Encourage your child to move to the music.
- Encourage your child to make sounds (La La) or sing.



Doing things with music

Do things while listening to music with your child:

- Sing
- Clap
- Dance
- Talk about how the music makes your child feel.





Doing things with music



To help your child succeed, you can:

- Encourage your child to make sounds (La La).
- Help your child clap or pat something like your hand.
- Rock your child to the rhythm of the music.

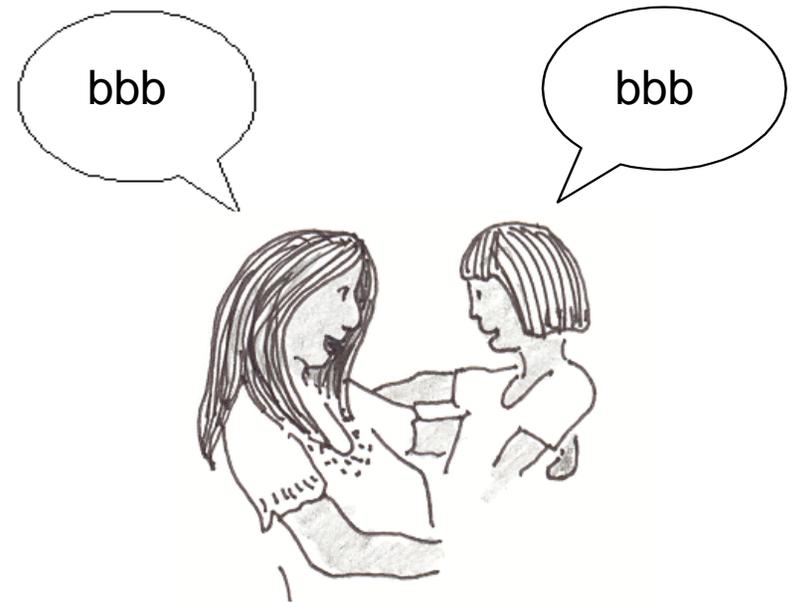


To make this activity more challenging, you can:

- Encourage your child to sing.
- Let your child use a musical instrument like a toy drum, or make music with sticks and stones, pots, pans, plastic containers and a wooden spoon.
- Ask your child open-ended questions (How does this music make you feel? What does this music make you think of?)

Playing with sounds

- Take turns making sounds or saying words with your infant or toddler.
- Make the same sound your infant or toddler is making (ba-ba).
- Make a sound that is like your infant or toddler's sound (ga-ga).
- Make sounds of familiar animals (dog, cat).
- Make sounds of familiar objects (car, water, wind).





Playing with sounds

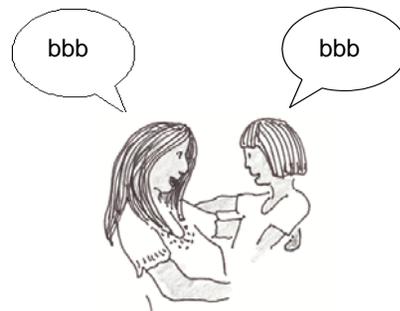


To help your infant or toddler succeed, you can:

- Do this activity while doing something your child enjoys (bathing, being tickled, eating or playing with toys).
- Wait and see if your child makes a sound, then imitate that sound.
- Play with toy animals or look at picture books about animals and make animal sounds.
- Make sounds while playing bouncing and turn-taking games (Horsie, Peekaboo).

To make this activity more challenging, you can:

- Make a sound and see if your child repeats it.
- Encourage your toddler to repeat two or three sounds after you (ga-da; ga-da-ba)
- Say a sound (b), then change it to a new sound (p). Does your toddler pay attention to the difference?



Singing songs

While singing songs to your child or listening to songs on the radio, you can:

- Help your child make body movements that go with the words (Row, Row Your Boat).
- Encourage your child to sing along.
- Make up your own song about something you are doing, or that your child is interested in.





Singing songs



To help your child succeed, you can:

- Sing your child's favorite songs.
- Sing a song while doing something your child enjoys (bath or swinging).
- Give your child a toy or object that relates to the song (toy animals when singing Old MacDonald Had a Farm).
- Encourage your child to say a few words (Row, Row).
- Make up songs with animal sounds or sounds of objects and have your child say the sounds with you.

To make this activity more challenging, you can:

- Encourage your child to sing the song without your help.
- Encourage your child to make up his/her own words to the song.
- Talk about what the song is about. Ask what your child likes about the song.



Learning about rhyming

To have your baby or toddler hear rhyming words, you can:

- Sing or listen to songs with rhyming words (Twinkle Twinkle Little Star).
- Read books with rhyming words (Goodnight Moon).
- Say nursery rhymes (Hickory, Dickory, Dock).
- Use silly rhymes during routines (Go to bed, cover up your head, blow your nose, wiggle your toes).





Learning about rhyming



To help your baby or toddler succeed, you can:

- Say the rhymes while playing finger games (Pat A Cake), looking at a rhyming book or at bedtime.
- Have your toddler say the rhyming words with you.
- Say the rhyming words louder (star, far, are) or clap to the words.

To make this activity more challenging, you can:

- Start a song or nursery rhyme. Leave out the rhyming words and see if your toddler remembers them (Humpty, Dumpty sat on a ____?).
- Encourage your toddler to say the words and verses without your help.





Talking about nursery rhymes



To help your toddler succeed, you can:

- Say one or two nursery rhymes many times before doing this activity.
- Say parts of the nursery rhyme and have your toddler fill in.
- Have a big picture for your toddler to color.
- Help your child color.

To make this activity more challenging, you can:

- Encourage your toddler to say the nursery rhymes him/herself.
- Ask your toddler simple questions about the nursery rhymes.



Talking about food

Ask your child
questions about
food:

- What color is it?
- How does that taste?
- How does it smell?
- What do you like the best?





Talking about food



To help your child succeed, you can:

- Talk about how food tastes, smells and feels.
- Ask your child simple questions about his/her food (Does your cookie taste sweet?).
- Do this activity when you and your child are cooking in the kitch



To make this activity more challenging, you can:

- Encourage your child to describe food with more than one word (orange, juicy and sour).
- Have your child practice counting raisins and nuts and comparing sizes (big, little).
- Ask your child harder questions about food (Is an apple a fruit or a vegetable? What else tastes sweet?).

Talking about things outside

Talking to children about what they see or hear teaches them new words.

Ask your child questions about things he/she sees outside:

- What color is it?
- What do you see?
- How does it feel?
- What shape is this?





Talking about things outside



To help your child succeed, you can:

- Talk about something your child can touch and feel.
- Ask your child questions about things he/she is really interested in (rocks, mud, butterflies).
- Ask your child simple questions (Is this rock smooth?)



To make this activity more challenging, you can:

- Help your child to describe things with more than one word (brown, smooth, hard).
- Describe something nearby and see if your child can find it. Have your child describe something for you and try to find it.
- Play with your child at putting things into categories (beetles are insects, an acorn is a nut, a rose is a flower).

Listening to different sounds

Have your child listen for:

- Birds and insects
- Cars and airplanes
- Animals
- Leaves rustling in the wind
- Water

Talk about how these things sound.





Listening to different sounds



To help your child succeed, you can:

- Have your child listen for things your child can see.
- Have your child listen for things your child likes.
- Have your child listen for loud things (cars, trucks, dogs barking).
- Do this activity in a familiar place (backyard).
- Choose a quiet place with just a few sounds.

To make this activity more challenging, you can:

- Have your child listen for quiet things (cats meowing, people walking).
- Have your child listen to things that your child cannot see. Ask your child to guess what is making the sound.
- Have your child describe what he/she hears with a simple sentence. (The dog is barking. That's a big truck.)



Making a touch book

- Cut cardboard into same sized pieces.
- Put three holes in the pieces on the left side.
- Tie the pieces together with yarn, so you will have a book.
- Put one thing your baby likes on each page (rattle, rings, and keys).
- Talk about the things while your baby touches them.
- Share the book with your home visitor and other parents.





Making a touch book



To help your baby succeed, you can:

- Make only two pages.
- Turn the pages for your baby.
- Help your baby touch the things on the pages.
- Tell your baby the name of each thing on the page.

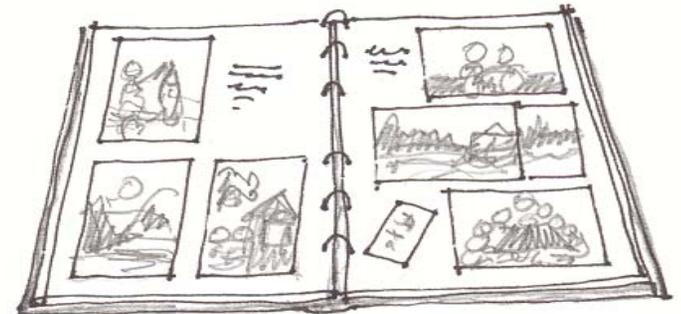
To make this activity more challenging, you can:

- Put new things (cotton, aluminum foil, yarn) on the pages.
- Have your baby turn the pages him/herself.
- Encourage your baby to vocalize when looking at
ge.



Making a picture book

- Cut cardboard into same sized pieces.
- Put three holes in the pieces on the left side.
- Tie the pieces together with yarn, so you will have a book.
- Put a picture of someone or something your child likes on each page (family, pets and Teddy Bear).
- Talk about what your child sees.
- Share with the home visitor and other parents.





Making a picture book



To help your child succeed, you can:

- Make the pictures bigger.
- Turn the pages for your child.
- Let your child touch the pictures.
- Name who is in each picture.
- Show your child the book when he/she is in a quiet mood.

To make this activity more challenging, you can:

- Have more persons in the pictures.
- Have your child name who is in each picture.
- Talk about what your child does with each picture.
- Have the people's names written under their pictures.



Looking at pictures in a book

- Talk about what your child is looking at.
- Ask questions about what your child is looking at (What is Spot doing?).
- Wait for your child to say something (Spot hiding.).
- Add a little bit more to what your child says (Spot is hiding under the bed.).





Looking at pictures in a book



To help your child succeed, you can:

- Use a book with large pictures of things your child likes (baby animals).
- Ask your child simple questions (Is the froggy green?).
- Wait longer for your child to say something (Yeah, froggy green.).
- Make a simple sentence out of what your child said (Yes, the froggy is green.).



To make this activity more challenging, you can:

- Ask your child to make connections to your child's own experiences (Have you seen a doggie like this before?).
- Ask your child harder open-ended questions (Why is Goldilocks breaking Baby Bear's things? What is a kennel?).
- Add more to what your child said (She is too big for his things, because she probably is older than him.).

Learning how to use books

Teach your toddler:

- What the front of books are.
- What the back of books are.
- How to turn pages from right to left.
- What pages are.
- What words and letters are.





Learning how to use books



To help your toddler succeed, you can:

- Let your toddler feel the book's cover, pages and pictures and talk about them.
- Use sturdy cardboard books with thick pages so your toddler can turn the pages.
- Have your toddler point to pictures in the book.

To make this activity more challenging, you can:

- Have your toddler show you how to turn pages from right to left.
- Point to the parts of the book (front, back, pages) and ask your toddler what they are.
- Talk about the front page that tells about the title, author and illustrator.



Discovering print

Point out that there are pictures and words on:

- Food packaging
- Clothing
- Buildings
- Road signs
- Automobiles
- Billboards

Help your child learn these pictures and words.





Discovering print



To help your child succeed, you can:

- Talk about pictures and words in family photo albums, junk mail, magazines and newspapers.
- Point to pictures and words on things that your child touches often (clothes, toys, crayons, cereal boxes).

To make this activity more challenging, you can:

- See if your child knows what signs, pictures, words and numbers mean.
- Point to big letters in signs of familiar restaurants, grocery stores, and road signs.
- Cut out pictures and signs from cereal boxes and other products and use to make puzzles or play matching card games with your child.



Seeing first words

- Your child will recognize words on food packaging, buildings, and other things.
- See if your child can see any other words.
- Ask your child questions about these words (What do we do with Cheerios?).





Seeing first words



To help your child succeed, you can:

- Point to words your child often sees (McDonald's or Cheerios) and ask your child what the words are.
- Say words you see and point to them.
- Ask your child simple questions about words he/she sees (Do we eat Cheerios?).

To make this activity more challenging, you can:

- See if your child knows the difference between a picture, a word and a number.
- Ask your child questions to make him/her really think (What else could we do with Cheerios?).



Learning my name

Put your toddler's name on his/her:

- Bedroom door
- Toys
- Cup
- Drawings

Teach your toddler the names and sounds of the letters in his/her name.





Learning my name



To help your toddler succeed, you can:

- Put your toddler's name on his/her favorite things (blanket, dolly).
- Write your toddler's name in scented crayons, and let him/her smell it.
- Write your toddler's name in his/her favorite color.
- Write your toddler's name next to a photograph or portrait.

To make this activity more challenging, you can:

- Say the names of the letters in his/her name.
- Help your toddler to say the letters in his/her name.
- Say the sound of the first letter in his/her name and help your toddler imitate it.



Going to the grocery store

When you go to the grocery store with your toddler, you can:

- Point to the signs and read them to your toddler.
- Show your toddler the things on your grocery list one at a time and have your child help you find them.
- Read the labels with large print.
- Read the numbers on prices.





Going to the grocery store



To help your toddler succeed, you can:

- Point to and read signs for the food your toddler likes to eat.
- Read the labels of the things your toddler is interested in.



To make this activity more challenging, you can:

- Make a grocery list with your toddler before you go to the store. Talk to your toddler about what you are doing.
- At the store, show your toddler how you use the grocery list to find the items.

Many ways to draw

You and your child can scribble or draw figures, shapes and letters with:

- Crayons, pens, and pencils.
- Finger paint.
- Chalk on a chalkboard.
- Your fingers in the sand, on steamy car windows or foam in the bathtub.

You and your child can also:

- Use stickers or cut out pictures from magazines and catalogs.
- Glue string, yarn, leaves, pebbles or dried noodles on paper.

Display your child's work on a wall, the fridge or a bulletin board.





Many ways to draw



To help your child succeed, you can:

- Let your child choose what to draw with.
- Start drawing first.
- Have your child draw a person or one of his or her favorite things.
- Help your child decide what to draw.
- Talk about what you and your child are drawing.

To make this activity more challenging, you can:

- Ask your child questions about your child's drawing.
- Write what your child says about the picture.
- Ask your child to write his/her name on the picture. Scribbles and a few letter-like shapes are ok.



Many ways to “write”

Your toddler can scribble, draw and “write” words with:

- Crayons, pens, and pencils.
- Finger paint, chalk and shaving cream.
- Letters cut out of magazines or food packaging, letter stickers.
- Letter on blocks.
- Wooden, foam or magnetic letters, or letters made with play dough.





Many ways to write



To help your toddler succeed, you can:

- Make marks (hand and footprints) with paint or in the sand, and talk about what they are.
- Make scribbles and circles in baby's applesauce on his/her highchair tray.
- Make the first letter of your baby's name in applesauce or pudding.
- Name the shapes and letters you make as your child watches.

To make this activity more challenging, you can:

- Use shaving cream on a mirror to scribble, draw and "write" with your toddler.
- Write your toddler's name on a steamy window; say the letters and help him/her to say them too.
- Use a big paint brush and water to "write" on a fence or sidewalk; a stick to make marks in the sand; draw with sidewalk chalk together.



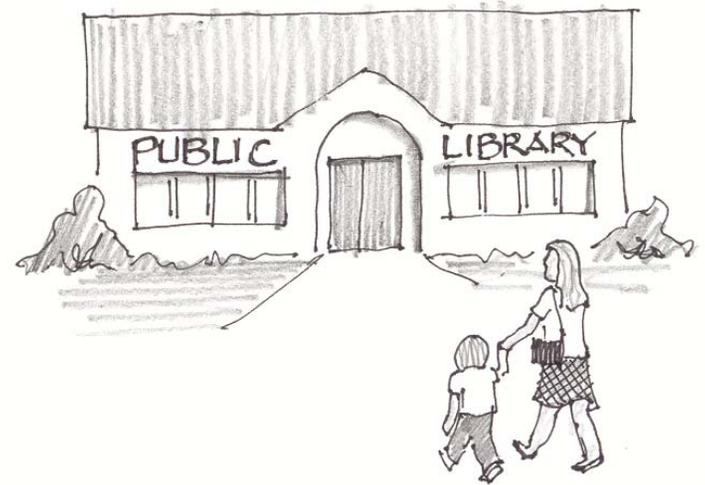
Going to the library

It's never too early to go to the library with your infant or toddler. At the library, you and your child can:

- Find books, magazines, music and videos.
- Check out books, and books on tape.
- Listen to stories.
- Watch puppet shows.
- Find information on computers.
- Find out what happens in your community

If you need help, ask the librarian. They are very friendly!

If you do not have a library in your area, ask your child's educator about book mobile routes.





Going to the library



To help your child succeed, you can:

- Talk about what your child can do at the library before going there.
- Do one thing your child really enjoys at the library.
- Go to the library when your child is in a quiet mood.

To make this activity more challenging, you can:

- Have your child choose a book or a topic him/herself.
- Have your child help you find things at the library.
- Encourage your child to check out books to read at home.

