



Early Literacy

The child enjoys a variety of pre-reading activities, including adults reading to her or him daily, looking at and handling books, playing with a variety of media, and showing interest in pictures, letters, and numbers.

Reading aloud to preschoolers is the single most important factor in raising readers. Early literacy is about supporting the very early stages that will help prepare a young child for future success in school and in life.

The most effective technique for this age group is exposing them to a lot of different books. Books should introduce them to letters and numbers, and to pictures that range from beautifully painted illustrations to cartoon drawings to real-life photographic images. They

should support children's growing curiosity about the world around them and how they fit in it. Preschoolers should be exposed to peaceful stories that make them feel loved and secure, and to playful adventures that allow them to feel powerful and help them learn to solve problems.

Books that preschoolers can look at on their own, such as the *I Spy* books with hidden pictures or the Richard Scarry books with pages full of fascinating undertakings, hold their in-

Getting the most out of story time

Three-year-olds like and need to interact during reading. Pause every few pages to ask simple "what" questions: "What's that? What is she doing? What color is the ball?" Affirm correct answers and expand on them to encourage literacy development: "Yes, it's an airplane and it goes really fast up in the sky!" Supply answers when a child doesn't respond, ask him to repeat the answers back to you, and affirm his effort: "An airplane. Yes! It flies fast up in the sky."

Four- and five-year-olds prefer an entertaining romp through a book from beginning to end. Use time before and after the story to ask questions. Show them the cover and read the title, then ask them to guess what the story is about and what happens. When choosing a familiar book, ask the children to recall what happens before you begin to read. After the story, playfully explore what was read, avoiding a lecturing tone.



terest and support their budding sense of independence and self-reliance.

Taking books a step further enhances early literacy skills immensely. In his study “Reading to Preschoolers Exposed: Is the Emperor Really Naked?” C. J. Lonigan found that when adults interact with children during story time they are increasing the children’s potential for future academic success. Asking children what they think will happen next in the story or how and why events in the book happened encourages abstract thinking and linguistic expression. These children are not only more likely to learn to read in the early elementary years but also more likely to “read to learn” in the middle elementary years.²

Ways You Can Build This Asset

Letter of the day activities.

Number of the day activities.

Rhyming games—listen to groups of words and choose ones that rhyme.

Matching—shoe store, sock store, or laundry; match opposites (up/down, tall/short) too.

What’s behind?—hide an apple behind the letter *a*, a bug behind the letter *b*, a picture of a cat behind the letter *c*, and so on.

Listening activities—build children’s listening skills through activities such as scavenger hunts or Simon Says (asset 12—Boundaries) or true/false games (asset 29—Honesty).

Compare sizes of groups of items and use a variety of words (huge, tiny, medium, slim, bigger) to describe them.

Make up songs and stories.



Resources for Educators



Read-Aloud Books

Caps for Sale by Esphyr Slobodkina. United States: E. Slobodkina, 1987.

Dear Zoo: A Lift-the-Flap Book by Rod Campbell. New York: Little Simon, 1999.

Mrs. Wishy-Washy by Joy Cowley, illustrated by Elizabeth Fuller. New York: Philomel Books, 1999.

Where the Wild Things Are by Maurice Sendak. New York: HarperFestival, 1992.

Goldilocks and the Three Bears

(See accompanying activities below and on page 107.)

Books for Children to Look at on Their Own

Cars and Trucks and Things That Go! by Richard Scarry. New York: Golden Books, 1998.

I Spy Little Animals by Jean Marzollo, illustrated by Walter Wick. New York: Scholastic, 1998.

I Spy Little Wheels by Jean Marzollo, illustrated by Walter Wick. New York: Scholastic, 1998.

I Spy Little Letters by Jean Marzollo, illustrated by Walter Wick. New York: Scholastic, 2000.

I Spy Fun House: A Book of Picture Riddles by Jean Marzollo, illustrated by Walter Wick. New York: Scholastic, 1993.

Richard Scarry's What Do People Do All Day? by Richard Scarry. New York: Random House, 1968.

Activity: A Visit from Mrs. Wishy-Washy,
with *Mrs. Wishy-Washy* by Joy Cowley, illustrated by Elizabeth Fuller

Mrs. Wishy-Washy jumps off the page when one adult dresses like Mrs. Wishy-Washy and pretends to wash the cow, the pig, and the duck as another adult reads the book aloud.



Songs and Rhymes “The Things I’ll Learn”

(to the tune of “Happy Birthday to You”)

I’ll be printing my name
Matching shapes all the same
Learning letters and numbers
Taking turns at the game
My teacher will read
Teach me all that I need
I’ll go to kindergarten
So very smart indeed.

Reference Music: “The Alphabet Song”

Note: Refer to pictures of letters of the alphabet while singing this song to help preschoolers make the connection.

Activity: Put on a Play

with *Where the Wild Things Are* by Maurice Sendak, *Caps for Sale* by Esphyr Slobodkina, or *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*

The stories come to life when the children act them out. *Where the Wild Things Are* and *Caps for Sale* allow an unlimited number of children to participate. With *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*, children love taking turns playing the different characters and sometimes switch with another child right in the middle of the play! Remember that there are roles off the stage as well, such as stage manager, lighting director, and costume designer. Putting on plays is about getting the kids excited about the story by becoming a part of it. It’s not about a polished production, so sit back and have fun!