Arkansas Children's Week
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Meet Me Under The Storytelling Tree

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Arkansas Children's Week 2012
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Meet Me under the Storytelling Tree

As is often the case with Arkansas Children's Week, first came the topic: "something to do with literacy." Inspired by this idea, long lists of possible articles began to form: pieces about letter recognition, phonemic awareness, and the stages children go through when learning how to read and write.

Next, we needed a title for our Children's Week - something to be shared and celebrated by programs, professionals, children, and families throughout our state. The planning committee unanimously agreed on the theme, "Meet Me under the Storytelling Tree" – a title which evokes images of children and adults alike coming together, stretching out or snuggling in close, as fantastic tales are told.

What does this title – this vision of a storytelling tree – have to do with that first list of literacy topics? Actually, our storytelling tree has much more to do with literacy than we might first think.

The act of sharing stories together is timeless – a way to come together, make connections, and delight in a story well told. We've learned that eager listeners grow to become eager readers. In fact, children who regularly read with a trusted adult during their early years are much more likely to experience success in school later on.

While early literacy skills are important, teaching a child to read is no simple chore. Learning to recognize letters of the alphabet is one small step in the literacy journey, but so, too, are skills like comprehension, inferential thinking, and a meaningful understanding of the rules and rhythms of language. The seeds for these complex concepts are planted even as we show a baby her very first book, and continue grow each and every time we lovingly read, rhyme, chant, list, and spin stories with her.

We must not forget that some of the greatest gifts we can give our children are a love of books and fond memories of time shared together with favorite stories. Evidence of future readers-in-the-making may not be shiny alphabet posters on the wall of the classroom, but favorite books on the shelf, tattered and worn from being read and reread, and from being held close, pored over, and paged through by very young children in love with the story, the illustrations, and the characters.

Children learn to read and write when it is meaningful to them – when they are excited about being able to share their ideas with others through written words, or with the opportunity to visit other worlds through stories. We don't just hope to raise children who master the most basic concepts of how to read and write; we hope to raise readers, writers, and storytellers.

We must challenge ourselves to ask:

How do we make stories and story-times magical ,meaningful, and memorable for our children?

How do we help children learn the power of their words and their imaginations, and the wonder of sharing with others?

How do we welcome and include each family in their child's literacy experiences?

These questions will be asked, and answers explored, during our 2012 Arkansas Children's Week.
Welcome to the Storytelling Tree!

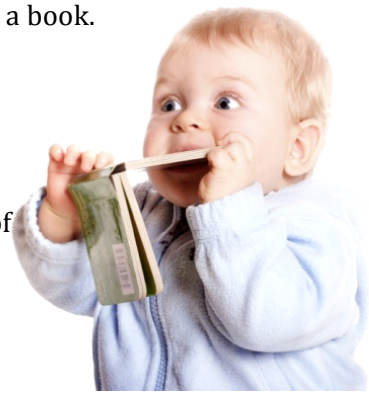
The youngest reader's journey

As with many facets of infant toddler development, the very young child's interactions with books often follow a somewhat predictable path. Where is your baby on the continuum below?

First year of life (birth-12 months)	**Second year of life** (12 – 24 months)	**Third year of life** (24-36 months)
Looks directly at pictures in books. Grasps, shakes, sucks on book. Holds book using both hands and experiments with opening and closing. Gives book to adult to read, takes back and repeats. If not distracted, may on adult lap for long enough to read a short book or two. Points to or pats at pictures in books.	Turns inverted book right side up, or tilts head to try to see picture right side up. Shows preference for a favorite page of a book. Points to many familiar objects on page when asked. Makes animal noises or other sound effects to match pictures on the page. Communicates desire for favorite books. Asks, "What's that?" when curious about unfamiliar object on page.	Turns paper pages by self, with little accidental crumpling or tearing. Joins in reciting familiar phrases from book with reader. Shows empathy for characters in book. Integrates characters and themes from books into pretend play. Recites simple books while turning the pages, remembering all of the key lines.

11 ways that a baby enjoys a good book

1. Lick, nibble, drool on, and chew. Yum!
2. Grab the book and shake, shake, shake it – universal baby language for "I like this!"
3. Toss it -the only logical thing to do after grabbing and shaking! Board books hit the ground with a nifty clunking sound.
4. Bang two books together – another nifty sound.
5. Study during tummy time; multitask by building muscles and brain at the same time.
6. Scoot a book across the floor. Or, scoot across the floor on a book.
7. Sit on it. Why not?
8. Pat the pages and point to pictures.
9. Open and close, turn the pages again and again. The best books are enjoyed forwards, backwards, and even upside down.
10. Tell the story in baby babble, hooting with laughter at all of the really funny parts.
11. Snuggle in the lap of a much loved someone to share a favorite story.



Books for infants, toddlers, and twos

Books are a valuable part of any infant/toddler care environment, and reading together with a trusted adult can be a wonderful way for very young children to learn language skills and concepts, and to develop a love for books. Here, you'll find lists of some of the very best books for infants and toddlers at each stage of development.

High contrast books

Books with black-and-white or brightly colored images that include sharp contrasts between the pictures and the page sometimes catch the interest of even the youngest infants. Try cuddling baby in your arms with her head supported, and show her a few pages of a high contrast book. Hold the book still and level for long as she shows interest; she may want to look at the same page for quite awhile. Other times, she may squirm or look away, or drift off to sleep. At this age, it is all about following her lead!

Here are some high contrast books to try:

Baby Animals Black and White by Phyllis Limbacher Tildes
Baby animal faces are illustrated in high-contrast black and white to capture the young infant's interest. The pictures are charming enough to appeal to mobile infants and toddlers, as well, making this a great book for multi-age environments.

Black on White and *White on Black* by Tina Hoban
These two books feature very simple outlines of familiar objects – such as a leaf, a butterfly, and a bottle – each centered on a background of the contrasting color.

I Kissed the Baby by Mary Murphy
Be prepared to sing, tickle, quack, and, of course, give lots of kisses while sharing this enthusiastic tale about a new baby in the barnyard. Illustrated with bright colors and white graphics on a black page.

Look! Look! by Peter Linenthal
Cut paper art patterns of simple fish, stars, cars, and more encourage infants to study each page. The accompanying text is printed in red on the black and white pages. This book is also excellent for older children with visual impairments.

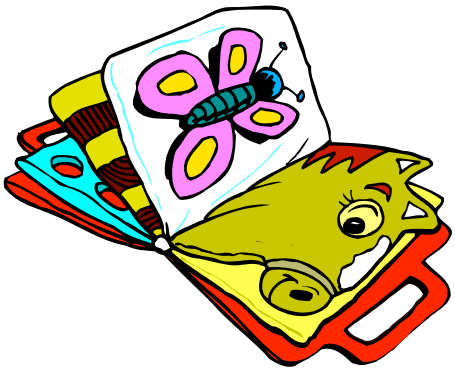
Soft books
These books allow smaller babies and active, book-tossing toddlers to explore books independently without hurting themselves or others. They are easy to grasp, and, as an added bonus, most soft books can be washed when needed. Check out these soft stories:

Fuzzy Bee and Friends by Roger Priddy
This book introduces baby to a group of garden friends, all drawn in bold, bright colors.

Maisy's Snuggle Book by Lucy Cousins
Whimsical drawings of Maisy the mouse and friends grace this soft, flannel book.

Plip-Plop Pond by Karen Pixton
This book is part of the Indestructibles series, an amazing collection of colorful, non-toxic, rip-proof, washable paper-like books. This title takes baby on a trip to the pond, while others in the series feature farm animals, forest animals, insects, and birds.

Where's the Bone? by Manhattan Toy
As children help the puppy in this story, the attached soft, toy bone can be tucked into – and pulled out of – pockets on each page.



Tactile books
Tactile books encourage infants and toddlers to explore a world of texture, from soft, fuzzy fur to rough, scratchy sandpaper, and everything in between. Look for tactile books with large, interesting texture panels, free of buttons or other small pieces that may quickly come loose in the hands (or mouth) of a busy baby. Here are some favorites:

I Like Fruit and *I Like Vegetables* by Lorena Siminovich
These lovely collage books introduce colors, opposites, and familiar foods while encouraging little hands to explore unique textures and patterns.

Peekaboo Kisses by Barney Saltzberg
Cheerful illustrations allow children to play peek-a-boo with friendly-looking animals. There are a variety of colorful, furry textured pages, as well as a mirror at the end of the book.

Tails by Matthew Van Fleet
This book features a menagerie of cute and quirky animals with tails for touching. Spiky tails, furry tails, scaly tails – even stinky skunk tails – all beg to be explored in this rhyming and counting tale.

Touch and Feel Pets and *Touch and Feel Farm* by DK Publishing
Beautiful, full color photos of familiar pets and farm animals are paired with texture patches of "fur," "wool," and more.

Books about babies
Infants and toddlers are often fascinated with other very young children. Books with photos of real babies are often pored over and studied with great interest. Here are some baby books to add to your collection:

Carry Me by Rena Grossman
How do babies travel? Whether wrapped in mom's arms, hoisted on a hip, or packed in a basket, babies are on the go all over the world. Infants and toddlers will enjoy colorful photographs of infants and caregivers from the United States, Kenya, Scotland, Ecuador, and more.

Hands Can by Cheryl Willis Hudson
Simple photographs capture toddlers hard at work and play, using their hands to throw a ball, wave hello, play in the sand, and more.

I Love Colors by Margaret Miller
Close up photos of babies wearing easy-to-spot accents for learning colors, including purple sunglasses, a bright orange flower, and a big red bow! This book is sure to inspire lots of pointing from little readers!

Mrs. Mustard's Baby Faces by Jane Wattenberg
This slightly surreal but eye-catching book features photos of baby's faces on bright, bold, patterned backgrounds. It folds out accordion-style, with cheerful, happy babies on one side, and cranky, tearful babies on the other.

Smile by Roberta Grobel Intrater
A short-but-sweet book filled with close-up photos of beautiful baby grins.

Books about familiar experiences
While books about deep sea creatures, penguins, or outer space adventures may seem exciting, infants and toddlers often relate most to books that depict objects and experiences from life at home, at school, and in the yard. Not only do these familiar things make sense to little ones, they naturally encourage young children to classify, compare, and connect pictures in books to the real world.

For infants, these books include simple photos or drawings of familiar toys, household objects, and pets, as well as books that show daily routines, such as eating meals and getting dressed. As older toddlers become more worldly, their scope of experience may expand to include outings to the grocery store, farm, or doctor's office. Books can be introduced to connect children's everyday experiences to story time. Here are a few examples:

Bear About Town by Stella Blackstone
Toddlers will enjoy following bear on trips around town to the bakery, gym, toy store, and more. Detail-oriented toddlers love to study the map in the back of the book! The series includes a collection of similar titles, such as *Bear at Home* and *Bear on a Bike* and most are available in bilingual editions.

More books about familiar experiences

Going to the Potty by Fred Rogers
Photos and simple text familiarize toddlers with bathroom basics in a gentle, matter-of-fact way.

Peekaboo Morning by Rachel Isadora
Lovely, realistic drawings show a young toddler waking up, greeting members of the household, and beginning a new day.

Truck by Donald Crews
This wordless book uses bold, colorful illustrations to follow a red tractor trailer truck on a trip across the country. Infants may not relate to it, but it could be perfect for toddlers who are developing a fascination with large vehicles! Similar Crews' titles include *School Bus* and *Freight Train*.

Where is Baby's Birthday Cake? by Karen Katz
Young toddlers can lift the flaps to help the baby in the story search through the house for birthday surprises.

Winter Babies Wear Layers by Michelle Sinclair Coleman and Nathalie Dion
Join winter baby as she bundles up and plays in the snow. This title is part of a series, which includes board books representing all sorts of baby lifestyles, from "Eco Babies" to "Country Babies" to "Foodie Babies" and more. There might just be a title for every baby you know!

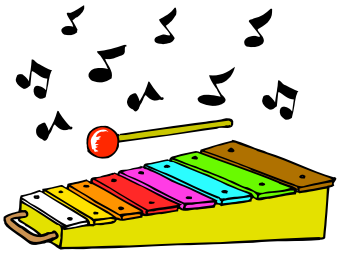
Sing-song stories with patterns and rhymes
When a caregiver sings or chants, infants and toddlers are often eager to join the fun! Rhythmic and musical stories are also wonderful ways to help children recognize language patterns, build motor skills, and connect with caregivers.

All Fall Down and *Clap Hands* by Helen Oxenbury
With a little help, even little babies can join in these sweet, simple action stories

Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See? by Eric Carle
Children will enjoy joining in to name the animals in this familiar, rhyming story.

Crocodile Beat by Gail Jorgenson
"Down by the river in the heat of the day, the crocodile sleeps and awaits his prey…" so begins this rhyming jungle tale that will have little ones stomping their feet, clapping their hands, and joining in on the noisy refrain.

Jamberry by Bruce Degan
A delightfully illustrated and imaginative story in which a boy and a bear sweetly share all things berry; this one is a must read!



More sing-song stories with patterns and rhymes

Mama Mama and *Papa Papa* by Jean Marzollo
Available separately or as a single, double sided book, *Mama Mama* and *Papa Papa* pair beautiful illustrations of baby animals and parents with a sweet song/poem for quieter times.

Sheep in a Jeep by Nancy E. Shaw
A group of sheep make a muddy mess of their jeep, much to the amusement of young readers. This is exactly the sort of simple, silly, rhyming story that makes toddlers exclaim, "Read it again!"

Simple stories
Many books designed for infants and toddlers do not have much of a plot, but instead focus on listing or naming things. As infants move into toddlerhood, they may begin to show a preference for books that tell a story with a clearly defined beginning, middle, and end. Here are some "starter stories" for the toddlers in your life:

The Gruffalo by Julia Donaldson
The story is all about a scary beast known as the Gruffalo, but the illustrations are anything but frightening! Younger toddlers will enjoy the rhyming, repetitive story line and the many animals to point out and name, while older children may begin to appreciate the humor and irony of the tale.

The Napping House by Audrey Wood
A cumulative and predictable tale that manages to be both sweet and slightly silly at the same time, this is often a favorite of older toddlers. Consider sharing the big book version with small groups of toddlers to ensure that everyone can see the wonderful illustrations!

One-Dog Canoe by Mary Cassanova
Another cumulative tale, *One-Dog Canoe* adds an array of lakeshore animals to a canoe, ending with a big splash! This book can be a lighthearted reminder to toddlers to use their "big voices" to say "no" when needed, and to listen to one another.

Where's Spot? By Eric Hill
Suited for a younger audience than the other simple stories listed here, this lift-the-flap favorite encourages children to help search the house for Spot the puppy.

Tall tales for fun-loving toddlers
As toddlers grow, they often develop a love for the silly and absurd. Favorite funny stories are requested over and over again, and each opportunity to laugh together at a playful tale is cherished. These fun books are sure to result in fits of giggles:

Bark, George by Jules Feiffer
The confused little dog in this book can moo, quack, and meow, but not bark! His worried mother is determined to solve the problem, but your toddlers will just enjoy the fun of a pup who makes all the wrong sounds!

I Know a Rhino by Charles Fuge
Toddlers will appreciate the absurdity of a tea party with a rhinoceros, exercise with an ape, and a bubble bath with a giraffe. At the end of the story, it is discovered that the full-size animals in the colorful illustrations represent the little girl's play with her stuffed animals, mirroring the toddler reader's own love of pretend play.

Moo, Baa, Laa Laa Laa by Sandra Boynton
Toddlers love joining in the simple fun of this silly rhyming story, especially when the adult reader hams it up with farm animal sounds and singing pig voices. (It's the pigs who sing "Laa, Laa, Laa", of course!)

Piggy in the Puddle by Charlotte Pomerantz

Quotable Quotes for Readers

"Children are made readers on the laps of their parents."

— Emilie Buchwald

"So please, oh PLEASE, we beg, we pray, go throw your TV set away,

And in its place you can install, a lovely bookshelf on the wall."

— Roald Dahl, *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*

"There are many little ways to enlarge your child's world. Love of books is the best of all."

Toddlers going through a stubborn streak may relate to the little pig that refuses to leave the "squishy-squashy, mooshy-squooshy, oofy-poofy" mud in this amusing, repetitive tale.

Storytime starring… YOU!

Ten tips to capture and hold children's attention during story time

At story time, the difference between a bored, restless group and a delighted audience often lies in the skill of the reader. Here are some simple ways to transform story time from tedium to treasured experience.

1. **Pick a book they'll love.** Humorous stories and predictable texts are often good first choices. If you'll be reading to a group, look for books with clear, easy-to-see illustrations. When in doubt, ask an experienced preschool teacher or children's librarian to show you some of their all-time greatest story time hits.
2. **Become familiar with the story before read-aloud time.** You and the children will feel frustrated if you stumble over the text. Take a few moments to pre-read the books you'll be sharing at story time.
3. **Plan your place in the story time space.** When reading to a group, consider sitting sideways, with one shoulder facing the group. If you hold the book open while sitting like this, your audience can see the pictures while you read the text. With smaller groups, an intimate story time can be created when you sit on the floor with children. In larger groups, you may need to sit on a stool or chair so that everyone can see, but watch to ensure that children sitting close to you can see without straining their necks.
4. **Capture their attention before the very first word of the story.** Take a few moments to savor the cover together, asking questions to spark children's interest. Or, begin with a "sales pitch", such as, "Today, I brought for you a book that was my very favorite when I was your age. I can't wait to show it to you."
5. **Slow down and read with expression.** Rookie story readers often rush, but a hurried pace can cause children to feel anxious or distracted. Take your time, and use intonation to match your voice to the mood of the story. Is it cheerful? Suspenseful? Sleepy? Your voice can provide clues for children as they make sense of the text.
6. **Make good use of dramatic… pause.** A well-timed moment of quiet will catch the listener's attention and provide emphasis for the story.
7. **Don't be afraid to do character voices**. Not every character in every book needs a unique voice, but squeaky mice, booming giants, and other well-voiced characters can bring story time to life!
8. **Don't insist on silence.** Stories are exciting for young children, and excited children have a need to express themselves. If you've picked a book that really interests your children, they will be inspired to make comments, ask questions, and echo favorite phrases. This is all part of the fun of sharing books together.
9. **Wonder aloud.** "Where do you think she is going?", and "I wonder what will happen next?" Questions such as these can draw the drifting listener back to the story, and will encourage children to process information and share predictions. Instead of labeling children's ideas as right or wrong, try comments such as "That could happen… let's turn the page and see what the author has in mind."
10. **At the end of the story, take time to process, share, and respond.** Describe events with words like "funny" or "sad". Talk about how the characters' experiences are like the children's and your own, and about what you liked most or least about the story. Taking time to talk together at the end of the story wraps up story time smoothly while encouraging children to process what they have seen and heard.

Is this the right time for a story?

Are the children comfortable?

Can they see the book well?

Is this book suited to children's ages and interests?

Can children relate to the characters in the story?

Do I sound enthusiastic about our story,
and our story time together?

Am I finding ways to bring our story to life?

Creating a "Book Look" area for children

When you are at home, where can you go to enjoy a good book? Where can children in your classroom go? Hopefully, children have access to books throughout their day, along with time to page through books at their own pace. Creating a cozy area of the room that is especially designed for looking at books can help ensure that children have meaningful, appropriate experiences with books.

Where should our Book Look area be located?
The best location for a reading area is in a quiet corner of the classroom. The area should be protected from loud, active play, yet still easy for adults to supervise. It's good for the space to feel somewhat secluded, but, if the area is too remote, children may not know that it is intended for them. The space should also be physically accessible to all children in the group, and to adults, as well.

What sort of furnishings should be included in our Book Look area?
Most importantly, children need a relaxing place to relax and read. Soft furnishings make the space cozy and appealing, and invite children in. If space permits, it is wonderful to have a rocking chair, couch, or other full-sized furnishing - in addition to the children's furniture - to allow children and adults to share books together. Well-organized book storage in the Book Look area allows children to quickly spot favorite books and reach them easily.
Here are some furnishing suggestions by age group:

Infants

- Soft, comfortable rug or mat. For safety, avoid cushions, bean bags, and loose blankets with young infants.
- Sturdy, age appropriate books in good repair, made accessible to baby by placing them in shallow baskets on floor-level shelves, or in baskets directly on the floor next to the mat or rug.
- Comfortable place for adults and infants to share books together.

Fun "Alternative" Soft Furnishings:

- **Inflatable camp mattress**
- **Washable dog beds**
- **"Checkerboard" rug of mismatched carpet squares**
- **Large, cardboard box with cushions**

Toddlers and Preschoolers

- Soft, cozy rug for children who like to stretch out on the floor with a good book
- Inviting space to sit and read, such as a covered crib mattress with washable cushions or child-sized soft chairs.
- Collection of age-appropriate books and magazines in good repair, stored on one or more low, sturdy, tip-proof bookshelves to allow books to be displayed with front covers showing.
- If possible, a comfortable place for children and adults to share books together, such as a full-sized loveseat or couch.

School-agers

- Picture book shelf for younger kids, plus traditional bookshelves for older kids with books organized by reading level and/or type of book.
- If space permits, consider magazine racks, coffee table with books, and other "non-traditional" book displays.
- Comfortable places to curl up with a good book, such as bean bag chairs, a freestanding hammock, or a full-sized couch, located near the book storage area and protected from traffic and loud activities.
- Basket of personalized bookmarks and/or a place for school-agers to save longer books to return to day after day.

How many books should we have?
You'll want enough books to provide plenty of choices, but you don't want your shelves to be crammed with overwhelming heaps of books. A good rule of thumb is at least a few more books than children in the classroom, but you may have many more if storage space permits.

To maintain interest, ensure that at least some of the books are rotated often, always including a mix of old, familiar favorites and some new stories waiting to be discovered.

How should our Book Look area be used?
Children should be allowed to freely enter and exit the area as desired during long blocks of play time; it can be offered as one of many appealing choices during these times. Teachers may also wish to open the book area during quieter times, such as during arrival time or for children who do not fall asleep at nap.

Some teachers have the habit of putting children in "time out" in the library area, or requiring upset children go to this part of the classroom to calm down. This is not recommended, as children may begin to associate the area with punishment or upset feelings, and not recognize it as a space for relaxing and enjoying books. Instead, make the Book Look area a special, positive space, where children want to go.

Does that mean that our Book Look area should contain nothing but books?
Not at all! To create a truly special area, consider adding anything that will capture children's attention, set a peaceful tone, and encourage children to explore concepts related to books. As long as the addition does not interfere with children's ability to read in peace, give it a try.

Possibilities include:

- Aquarium or fish tank
- Mobiles, sun catchers, window crystals
- Houseplants
- Puppets and stuffed animals
- Flannel board or magnet board
- Reading lamp(s)
- Shatterproof mirrors
- Canopy
- Pictures or posters of favorite book characters, or of things that have meaning to the children
- Listening station, with audio books, player, and headphones
- Risers, tents, window seats – any safe and age appropriate alternative places to read

Now that they have a place to read, how about a place to write?

In addition to the Book Look area, you might also want to create an "author's corner" for kids in preschool and beyond. This area might include:

- Blank paper of all sorts – greeting cards, envelopes, adding machine tape, blank journals, newsprint, sticky notes – anything that can be written on!
- Lots of utensils for writing - crayons, markers, pencils, pens.
- A few handy tools and "extras" that suit the area – stickers, stamps, stapler, hole punch, mailbox, and so on.
- Dictionary and/or word collection, especially for older kids.
- A comfortable desk or other place to work.

Spotlight on book display

Imagine yourself walking down the cereal aisle at the grocery store. Picture the rows and rows of colorful cereal boxes on each side. How are they placed on the shelves, and why? Chances are, they have been carefully arranged with the front labels showing in order to grab your eye. Each manufacturer hopes that their bright packaging will attract your attention and lead you to buy their Fruity Flakes, Cheerful-Os, or Bran Bombs.

Now think of a library. Imagine walking down an aisle with rows and rows of books on each side. How are they placed on the shelves? In many libraries, the spine of the books may be all you see, as each book is tucked into the shelf side-by-side with others.

If we want the books in our classrooms to catch the child's eye and draw her/him in to the reading area, we must find ways to store books with the front covers on display; bins and shelves stacked and crammed with books just won't do. Many educational supply companies offer beautiful wooden bookshelves intended to display books, but they can be quite costly.

What do you do if you have no money for a display shelf, or if your shelf is full and you would like to offer your children even more book choices?

Vinyl rain guttering, available at home improvement stores like Lowes and Home Depot, can be used to make wall-mounted shelves that display books with covers facing the reader.

Advantages of gutter shelves include:

- **Affordability** - for about $8 for a ten-foot-long strip, you can make 2, 5-foot-long shelves (see instructions on the next page).
- **Accessibility** – gutter shelves can be mounted at any height, so even the littlest readers can reach.
- **Small classroom "footprint"** – because the shelves mount on the wall, they don't take up valuable floor space the way that a bulky bookshelf can.

Do *you* Pinterest?

Pinterest (www.pinterest.com) is a "digital pinboard" that allows users to share their great ideas and fabulous finds with others. You'll find everything from recipes to household cleaning tips, but the real gem for educators are thousands of frugal, brilliant ideas for classroom materials, activities, and organization, and furnishings. Pinterest has revolutionized teacher networking!

To make 2, 5-foot-long rain gutter bookshelves:

You'll need:

- 10' vinyl rain gutter
- end caps – two left caps, two right caps
- at least 4 gutter brackets
- hot glue gun and glue
- hacksaw or similar saw
- wood screws
- measuring tape or yard stick
- drill or power screwdriver

Here's what to do:

1. Measure and mark your gutter and saw in half.
2. Slide the brackets onto the gutters, equally spaced and about 14 inches from the end of each side. Placement of brackets may depend on the studs in your wall; spacing can vary.
3. Apply glue to the edges of gutter and edges of end caps. Glue together.
4. Find and mark your studs, then hold shelves to the wall and mark the hole through the brackets, making sure you are in the stud if needed.
5. Drill your hole and then screw in the shelves through the bracket holes.
6. Add books!

Is it safe?

When properly assembled, rain gutter bookshelves are free of protruding screws and sharp edges; end caps protect little eyes and fingers, too.

As with any classroom material, care should be taken to replace the gutters if they become cracked or broken.

As with any shelf, adult supervision may be needed – especially with toddlers! – to ensure that the shelves are not used for climbing.

A Scavenger Hunt of Stories

A well-stocked classroom library is about more than just having a lot of books; providing many different kinds of books is also important. Here's why:

When a wide variety of books are accessible to children, opportunities for learning are multiplied. Some books are especially useful for teaching concepts like counting while other books promote recognition of patterns and rhymes in language. Some types of books are wonderful for helping children learn factual information, while others spark imagination and creativity. Providing many different books will expose children to all of the amazing things that books can do and will ensure that you have exactly the right book on-hand when "teachable moments" occur.

Having a diverse library means you'll have something for everyone. Did you have a favorite book as a child? Chances are, children in your classroom have favorites too, and they are as unique and different as the children themselves. One child may prefer books with bright, bold drawings, while another is drawn to photographs of real people and places. Some children love short, simple stories, while others adore long, complex "once upon a time" tales. From farm animals, to princesses, to trucks and trains, all of children's favorite things can be found in books. Children who learn to love and value books in the early years often grow to become strong, enthusiastic readers later in life, so helping each preschooler find and enjoy favorite books is worth the effort!

Books connect children to their world. Having a well-stocked classroom library enables you to always have a book ready to go when children become interested in real world events, such as the discovery of playground puddles or insects, the arrival of a new baby sibling, and so on. The more connections children make about the world, the deeper and more meaningful their understanding will be.

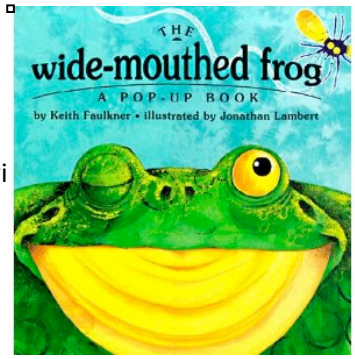
Below, you'll find a scavenger hunt of different kinds of books that are especially suited for preschool and kindergarten children. Search your classroom bookshelves to assess the variety of books available to your children.

Predictable books

Many preschoolers delight in books that follow a familiar and predictable sequence. These are wonderful stories for reading aloud because children enjoy joining in on recurring refrains. Predictable books can be especially suited for story times early in the school year, as children are first learning to come together to share books, and they are wonderful for capturing and keeping the attention of younger preschoolers any time of year. Predictable books are often short and simple, making them easy for children to recall and retell later.

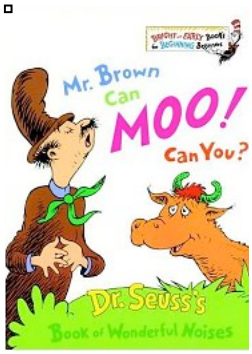
Examples of predictable books include:

- *Caps for Sale* by Espher Slobodkina
- *Go Away, Big Green Monster* by Ed Emberly
- *Pete the Cat: I Love My White Shoes* by Eric Litwi
- *The Wide-Mouthed Frog* by Keith Faulkner



Participation books

Like predictable books, participatory stories encourage engaging, interactive story times and are fun for children to retell and act out later. These appealing books have children talking to book characters and singing, clapping, and stomping along with the storyteller.

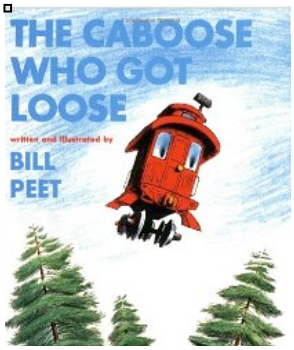


Some favorite participatory titles include:

- *Clap Your Hands* by Lorinda Bryan Cauley
- *Do Not Open This Book!* By Michaela Muntean
- *Mr. Brown Can Moo! Can You?* by Dr. Seuss
- *We're Going on a Bear Hunt* by Michael Rosen

Rhyming books

Rhyming books often make fun, sing-song read alouds, and naturally encourage children to recognize sounds and rhythms in spoken language. Build skills by pausing during reading, encouraging your listeners to guess and call out rhyming words.

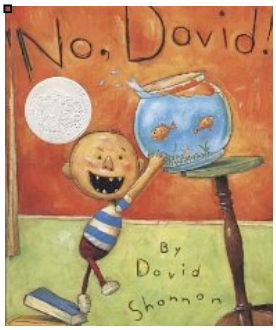


Here are some examples of rhyming stories:

- *Bringing the Rain to Kapiti Plain* by Verna Aardema
- *The Caboose Who Got Loose* by Bill Peat
- *Is Your Mama a Llama?* by Deborah Guarino
- *"Stand Back," Said the Elephant, "I'm Going to Sneeze!"* by Patricia Thomas

Laugh-out-loud books

Many young children love the silly and absurd, and funny stories are no exception!



Stories such as these are sure to give your kids the giggles:

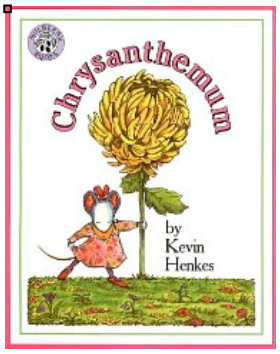
- *Don't Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus* by Mo Willems
- *Froggy Gets Dressed* by Jonathan London
- *Giggle, Giggle, Quack* by Doreen Cronin
- *No, David!* By David Shannon
- *Silly Sally* by Audrey Wood

Books with more complex storylines

Although simple, predictable, and rhyming tales are popular storytime favorites, there are also advantages to sharing more complex stories with children. Books that include a more substantial plot also often include a more complex collection of words for children to discover, and present lifelike characters to relate to and problems to solve. Just as the simplest, most active stories are well suited for younger preschoolers and first story times together, more complex stories are well suited for older preschoolers and for longer, quieter story times later in the year, after children have grown to love sharing stories with you.

Examples include:

- *Chrysanthemum* by Kevin Henkes
- *Corduroy* by Don Freeman
- *Make Way for Ducklings* by Robert McCloskey
- *Sylvester and the Magic Pebble* by William Steig

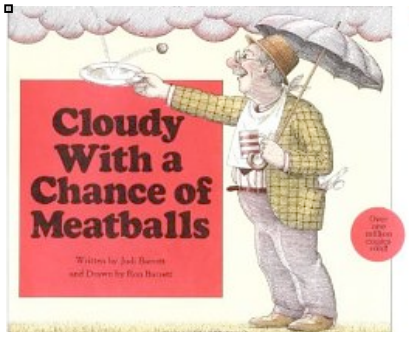


Whimsical and fantastic tales

These tall tales stretch imaginations while presenting wild ideas, unusual characters, and incredible events. Many folk tales and fairy tales fall into this category.

Examples include:

- *Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs* by Judi Barrett
- *Harold and the Purple Crayon* by Crockett Johnson
- *The Paper Bag Princess* by Robert Munsch
- *Where the Wild Things Are* by Maurice Sendak

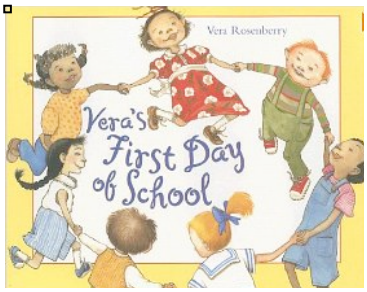


Books about familiar experiences

In contrast to fantasy tales, which appeal to some children due to their imaginative and unexpected subject matter, books about familiar experiences appeal to some children because they are so easy to relate to. These are stories about being a part of a family, going to school, running errands in a neighborhood, and other occurrences that are part of children's daily lives.

Books about familiar experiences include:

- *Bee-bim Bop* by Linda Sue Park
- *Peter's Chair* by Ezra Jack Keats
- *The Relatives Came* by Cynthia Rylant
- *Vera's First Day of School* by Vera Rosenberry

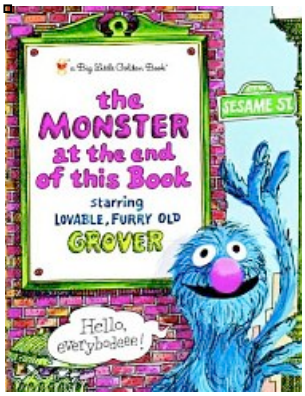


Suspenseful stories

Nothing prompts cries of "Read it again!" like a slightly suspenseful story! Most children enjoy the thrill of an exciting story with a dramatic climax. Care should be taken to pick stories that are slightly suspenseful, but not truly frightening. Otherwise, nightmares and insecurities may surface. Part of finding exactly the right books is to know children well; suspenseful stories are best introduced after the first few weeks of school, once children know and trust classroom adults, and once adults have had time to observe and learn about each child.

Here are some popular, just-scary-enough to be fun tales:

- *Abiyoyo* by Pete Seeger
- *The Dark at the Top of the Stairs* by Sam McBratney
- *The Little Old Lady Who Was Not Afraid of Anything* by Linda D. Williams
- *The Monster at the End of This Book* by Jon Stone

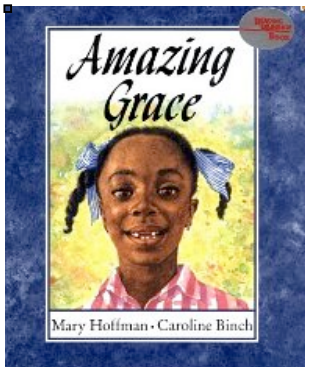


Books about people

While many books feature drawings or photos of children, look for least some books that genuinely explore feelings, relationships, way of life, and character. These books can be a great way to help children communicate about their own feelings and experiences, and also a way to help children understand diversity.

Examples include:

- *Amazing Grace* by Mary Hoffman
- *Ira Sleeps Over* by Bernard Waber
- *My Great-Aunt Arizona* by Gloria Houston
- *The Old Woman Who Named Things* by Cynthia Rylant

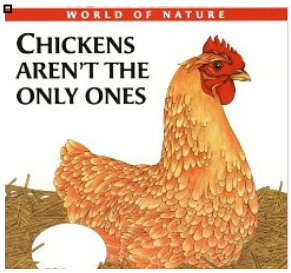


Informative books

While stories often come to mind when we think of favorite children's books, non-fiction, informative books are an equally valuable part of the classroom library. The best ones pair age-appropriate, informational text with interesting, realistic drawings or photos. Look for informative books about topics that children can relate to, such as those about pets, favorite vehicles, and familiar places.

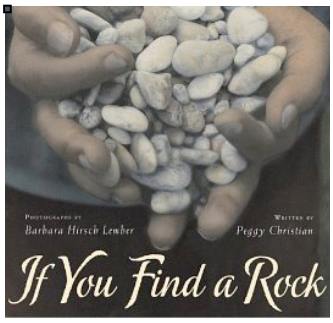
Examples include:

- *The Big Book of Things That Go* by DK Publishing
- *Chickens Aren't the Only Ones* by Ruth Heller
- *How a House is Built* by Gail Gibbons
- *Pumpkin Circle* by George Levenson



Books to connect children with nature

Consider including books with photos and illustrations that help children become attuned to the beauty and wonder of the natural world. These books may be fictional or non-fictional, but should provide details that draw children in to look closely and find out more.

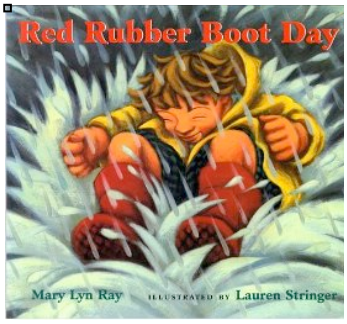


Examples include:

- *Cloud Dance* by Thomas Locker
- *First Snow in the Woods* by Carl R. Sams and Jean Stoick
- *If You Find a Rock* by Peggy Christian and Barbara Hirsch Lember
- *A Log's Life* by Wendy Pfeffer
- *Owl Moon* by Jane Yolen

Seasonal books

Can a child in the classroom tell the current season by the books on the shelf? There are many ways to connect books to children's real lives, including offering plenty of books that represent children's current experiences with weather and other seasonal changes.

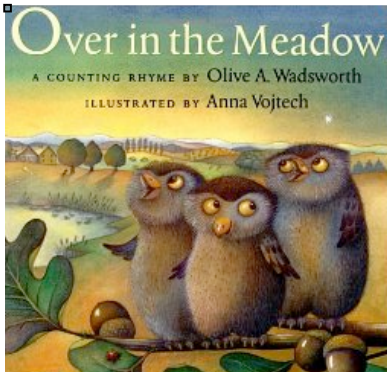


Examples include:

- *Come On, Rain!* By Karen Hesse
- *Fireflies* by Julie Brinkloe
- *Leaf Man* by Lois Ehlert
- *Red Rubber Boot Day* by Mary Lyn Ray
- *Snow* by Uri Shulevitz

Counting books

These books encourage children to count, recognize numbers, and understand the one to one correspondence of numbers.

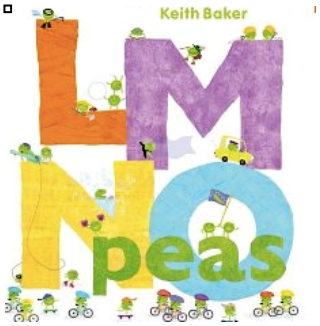


Examples include:

- *The Doorbell Rang* by Pat Hutchins
- *Each Orange had Eight Slices* by Paul Giganti, Jr.
- *10 Black Dots* by Donald Crews
- *Over in the Meadow* by Olive A. Wadsworth

Alphabet books

Alphabet books encourage children to explore letters and letter sounds, and can be a playful and enjoyable way to encourage letter recognition.

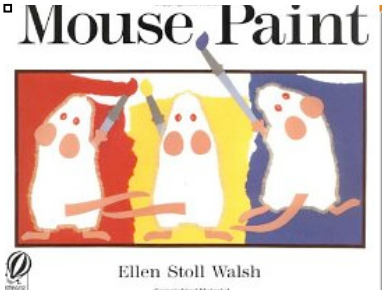


Possibilities include:

- *Alphabet City* by Stephen Johnson
- *Chicka Chicka Boom Boom* by Bill Martin Jr. and John Archambault
- *LMNO Peas* by Keith Baker
- *Museum ABC* by the Metropolitan Museum of Art

Other concept books

In addition to helping children recognize letters and numbers, there are amazing books available to introduce and practice a wide range of other concepts, including sequencing, patterning, recognizing shapes, and more. When selecting concept books, look for books that are appealing, well-written and illustrated, and age appropriate.



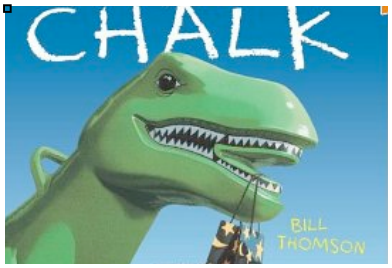
Examples include:

- *Do You Know Which Ones Will Grow?* By Susan A. Shea
- *Mouse Paint* by Ellen Stoll Walsh
- *Pattern Fish* by Trudy Harris
- *Perfect Square* by Michael Hall
- *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* by Eric Carle

Wordless Picture Books

There are many wonderful books available to read aloud to children and have children retell, but wordless books stimulate another skill: having children look closely at illustrations and create stories of their own. Here are some examples of wordless (or nearly wordless) picture books:

- *A Boy, a Dog, and a Frog* by Mercer Meyer
- *Chalk* by Bill Thomson
- *Changes, Changes* by Pat Hutchins
- *The Red Book* by Barbara Lehman
- *Red Sled* by Lita Judge



Handmade books created by children and teachers

Some of the most treasured books on the preschool shelf cannot be bought at the bookstore or checked out of the local library. Wise teachers know that children love books that they have a role in making. Possibilities include photo books of field trips or other classroom events and collections of the children's own drawings and stories told aloud and written down by an adult.

How diverse is your book collection?

Picture wisdom

Young children gain a tremendous amount of knowledge from the illustrations of picture books, both during story times with an adult and especially when they look through books independently. Take time for a "picture walk" through the pages of the books on your shelves. Consider clues that the illustrations offer to the young pre-reader, including:

Meaning- Illustrations provide valuable clues about the story. By studying the pictures, a child can learn who the characters are, the setting of the story, and much more. Watch for the child to lean in to the pictures to take a closer look, and to point to details on the page. The ability to find and make sense of contextual clues is a skill that will serve her well as she learns to read.

Mood- Light and playful, or somber and serious? Realistic, or whimsical? In a well-illustrated picture book, the colors and lines in each drawing set the tone of the story. Watch for the child to respond to or even mirror the mood of the illustrations with his facial expressions, tone of voice, and comments. Learning to recognize the tone and mood of a story now will help with reading comprehension later.

Attitude –We've often heard the saying, "don't judge a book by its cover", but children can (and must) do exactly that as they look at picture books.
Illustrations may contain subtle messages about gender roles, culture, responses to conflict, and more. What sort of roles do characters play? How do they respond when they are excited, frustrated, or disappointed? Remember that a child looking at a picture book by himself often tells the story based on pictures alone. Watch for the child to describe places, characters, and events in positive terms (good, nice, pretty) or negative terms (bad, mean, ugly) based on information gleaned from pictures in books. What sort of stories do the images in your books tell?

Did you know…

The Caldecott Medal is awarded annually by the Association for Library Service to Children, a division of the American Library Association. The medal is named after nineteenth-century English illustrator Randolph Caldecott, whose illustrations for children were distinguished by both their humor and their ability to create a sense of movement and action.

A medal inscribed with the illustrator's name and the year of the award is given to the artist of the most distinguished American picture book for children, as determined by a committee of distinguished professionals. In addition to the medal winner, honor books (kind of like "runners up") are also named. Caldecott medals have been awarded every year since 1938, and Caldecott books can be a great way to start a personal or classroom collection of strikingly illustrated children's books. Look for the silver, foil Caldecott Honor Seal – pictured at right - on the front cover of award winners.

Caldecott winners from the past six years

2011 Medal Winner
A Sick Day for Amos McGee, illustrated by Erin E. Stead, written by Philip C. Stead
2011 Honor Books:

- *Dave the Potter: Artist, Poet, Slave*, illustrated by Bryan Collier, written by Laban Carrick Hill
- *Interrupting Chicken* by David Ezra Stein

2010 Medal Winner
The Lion & the Mouse by Jerry Pinkney
2010 Honor Books:

- *All the World* ,illustrated by Marla Frazee, written by Liz Garton Scanlon
- *Red Sings from Treetops: A Year in Colors* , illustrated by Pamela Zagarenski, written by Joyce Sidman

2009 Medal Winner:
The House in the Night , illustrated by Beth Krommes, written by Susan Marie Swanson
2009 Honor Books:

- *A Couple of Boys Have the Best Week Ever* by Marla Frazee
- *How I Learned Geography* by Uri Shulevitz
- *A River of Words: The Story of William Carlos Williams* , illustrated by Melissa Sweet, written by Jen Bryant

2008 Medal Winner:
The Invention of Hugo Cabret by Brian Selznick
2008 Honor Books:

- *Henry's Freedom Box: A True Story from the Underground Railroad* illustrated by Kadir Nelson, written by Ellen Levine
- *First the Egg* by Laura Vaccaro Seeger
- *The Wall: Growing Up Behind the Iron Curtain* by Peter Sís
- *Knuffle Bunny Too: A Case of Mistaken Identity* by Mo Willems

2007 Medal Winner:
Flotsam by David Wiesner
2007 Honor Books:

- *Gone Wild: An Endangered Animal Alphabet* by David McLimans
- *Moses: When Harriet Tubman Led Her People to Freedom* illustrated by Kadir Nelson, written by Carole Boston Weatherford

2006 Medal Winner:
The Hello, Goodbye Window illustrated by Chris Raschka and written by Norton Juster
2006 Honor Books:

- *Rosa* illustrated by Bryan Collier and written by Nikki Giovanni
- *Zen Shorts* illustrated and written by Jon J. Muth
- *Hot Air: The (Mostly) True Story of the First Hot-Air Balloon Ride* illustrated and written by Marjorie Priceman.
- *Song of the Water Boatman and Other Pond Poems* illustrated by Beckie Prange, written by Joyce Sidman

Emergent literacy in the language-friendly preschool classroom

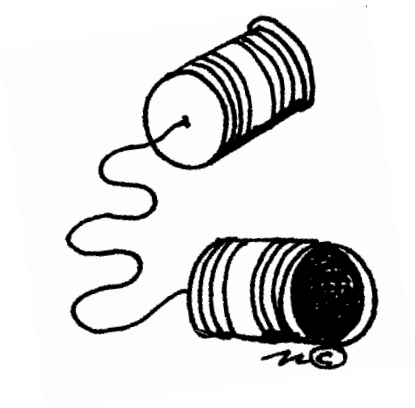
In recent years, *emergent literacy* has emerged as a topic of great interest to parents, educators, and administrators in schools and programs serving young children. Emergent literacy can be simply described as learning to speak, listen, read, and write in a gradual, natural manner, over the course of the early childhood years. Reading and writing are acquired skills, learned over time, and playful preschool activities such as writing in scribbles and pretending to read a favorite book play an important role in the process.

Literacy involves much more than just being able to recognize and copy letters on a page. Many other skills are involved first, including learning to look and see details, learning to hear and recognize differences in sounds, developing the muscles of the hand and eye, gradually building attention span and vocabulary, and developing an understanding of a vast array of concepts, including sequencing, segmentation, and sound matching. What an overwhelming list of skills to hope for children to master during their first, four, five, or six years of life! The good news is, the well-stocked early childhood environment has all of the tools that are needed to accomplish this fantastic task, and the daily schedule provides numerous wonderful opportunities for adults and children to learn together.

In this article, we'll explore some of the literacy concepts and skills that children can acquire in the classroom library area and beyond.

Speaking words and sentences and understanding spoken language – making a wide range of precise sounds to communicate meaning, and understanding words spoken by others.

To encourage this skill:



- Share stories that encourage children to echo text and repeat predictable lines of text, such as Eric Carle's *Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?*
- Have many turn-taking conversations with children, at story time and throughout the day. Talk with children about what they are seeing, doing, making, and experiencing.
- Include puppets, toy telephones, and other toys and props that encourage children to communicate throughout the classroom.

Comprehending and recalling – understanding concepts and events in a text read by an adult. Later, remembering and retelling a story.

To help children build recall skills:

- After sharing a book with children, ask questions to prompt simple recall. Questions might include, "What was in the box?" or "Let's see if we can remember the animals that we saw at the zoo..."

- Ensure that children have access to storytime books afterwards. Encourage them to read to you, to one another, and to dolls and stuffed animals.
- Use flannel board or magnet board pieces to retell simple stories, such as *Goldilocks and the Three Bears* or *The Little Red Hen*; have these pieces available for children to use independently.
- Refer back to favorite books time and time again. For example, when children find a cricket on the playground, you might remind them, "There was a cricket in our story yesterday. Do you remember what happened to that cricket?"

- Create prop boxes and play sets to encourage children to act out and retell favorite stories. For example, masks and cardboard bricks in the dramatic play area might encourage children to retell *The Three Little Pigs*, while a while a wooden train set in a floor play area could encourage children to retell *The Little Engine That Could* by Watty Piper or talk about Donald Crew's *Freight Train*.

Sequencing – understanding and telling the order of events, such as first, next, and last.

To help children practice sequencing:

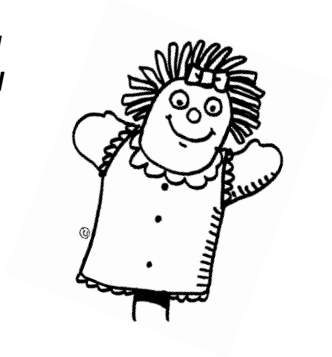
- After reading stories with children, talk about what happened first, later, and last in the story. Can they remember?
- Introduce sequencing terms such as before, after, next, and last. Model and expand as you talk to with children to give these words meaning.
- Read cumulative stories, such as Audrey Wood's *The Napping House* or Eric Carle's *Very Hungry Caterpillar.* Encourage children to participate in telling and retelling these stories.
- Create and share cumulative flannel board stories, such as a story about a flower growing. Share with groups of children, and then provide access to the materials for independent use by children.
- Include an accurate picture and word schedule, posted where children can easily see and reach it; refer to the schedule throughout the day.
- Take photos and create sequence cards of events that are familiar to children, such as the steps of setting the table for lunch.
- Use pictorial recipes to prepare simple snacks; focus on what must be done first, next, and last. As children eat their snack, encourage them to recall the steps.

Language Patterning - exploring patterns in the appearance and sound of words and in text that is read or said aloud by an adult. To encourage children to learn about patterns:

- Share books with strong, noticeable patterns, such as *Crocodile Beat* by Gail Jorgenson or *Chicka Chicka Boom Boom* by Bill Martin Jr. and John Archambault. Provide tapes or CDs of these stories in a listening center.
- Read poems with patterns to children. Include books of poetry in your library area. Popular choices include *Read Aloud Rhymes for the Very Young* by Jack Prelutsky and *Kids Pick the Funniest Poems* compiled by Bruce Lansky.
- Share nursery rhymes with your children. Consider Dr. Becky Bailey's *I Love You Rituals* for modern versions of nursery rhymes intended to help caregivers connect with children in a positive way.
- During transition times and group times, chant with children. You might even make up your own chants during routines, such as clapping as you chant:

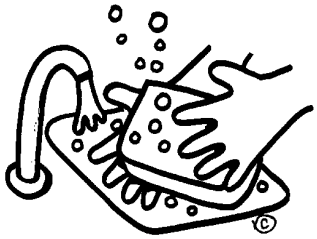
If you're ready for the hall, hall, hall
Put your back on the wall, wall, wall
or

It's time for every girl and boy
To pick up, pick up, pick up toys



or, while washing hands

Wet, wet, wet your hands
And now it's time for soap-o.
Scrub, scrub, scrub your hands (repeat three times)
And now it's time to rinse-o.



Rinse, rinse, rinse your hands (repeat three times)
And now it's time to dry-o.

Dry, dry, dry you hands (repeat three times)
And now it's time to (eat-o/play-o/go-o)

Rhyming – recognizing words that sound alike, especially words with the same ending sounds.
To encourage this skill:

- Share songs and poems with rhyming words, such as *Down by the Bay* and *Humpty Dumpty.*
- Select children's books with appealing, well-written rhyming text. Dr. Seuss books are one popular example.
- Play with rhyming words informally and through transition games.
- As children are ready, introduce rhyme-related matching games, go-together puzzles, and other activities that will expose them to a wide range of rhyming words.

Awareness onsets and rimes, and alliteration-recognizing the sounds that begin and make up words, and recognizing words with the same initial (beginning) sound.

To build children's awareness of these concepts:

- Select and share books that include alliterative text, such as *Some Smug Slug* by Pamela Duncan Edwards or *Alligators All Around* by Maurice Sendak.
- Play games where children pick pictures or guess words beginning with specific letter sounds.
- Sing songs and recite chants and rhymes that demonstrate alliteration, such as *Willoughby Wallaby* and *Miss Mary Mack.*
- Include an appealing children's dictionary, such as Richard Scarry's *Best Picture Dictionary Ever*, in your classroom reading area.
- Collect words that start with different letters on a word wall, or in a special notebook in your library or writing area.
- Make discovery bags or bottles containing sand or small beads, along with trinkets all beginning with a single letter of the alphabet. For example, the "Letter Bb" bottle might contain a small toy bear, a wrapped band-aid, a button, and so on. For older children, consider providing loose trinkets to sort by initial sound.
- Play with alliteration during transitions and routines. For example, you might call Mighty Maya, Super Sarah, and Amazing Antonio to line up for outside play. Or, you might have fun renaming the foods on your lunch plate with children. How about magnificent meatloaf, tip-top tator tots, and beautiful bananas?

Syllable awareness – understanding that words are made up of sections (syllables) that are separate from meaning.

To build these skills:

- Play a game of sorting short words and long words with similar meanings, such as "train" and "locomotive" and "bird" and "cardinal". Stack a block for each syllable, and compare the stacks.
- Play with syllables, with interactive songs and rhymes such as *Icky, Bicky Bumblebee*:

Icky, Bicky, Bumblebee
Won't you say your name for me?
(Child says name: "Colton")
Colton – Let's clap it – Col-ton (clap-clap)
Colton – Let's tap it – Col-ton (tap-tap)
Colton – Let's snap it – Col-ton (snap-snap)
Col-ton!

Inferential and critical thinking – includes understanding and interpreting text and predicting outcomes, beyond what is clearly stated in the text.

To encourage these skills:

- While reading, pause before the end of the story to ask children to make predictions about what they think will happen next.
- After reading, ask questions about why characters acted a certain way, or how they might have felt during certain parts of the story.
- Encourage children to draw comparisons between two different books or characters. For example, after reading two fictional books about grandmothers, you might discuss or make a chart about how the characters were similar and how they were different. Encourage children to talk about their own grandmothers, as well.
- Use books as a starting point for activities that encourage sorting and classification. For example, after reading "*Town Mouse, Country Mouse*" by Jan Brett, you might make a list of things found in a town, and things found in the country. Include children's own ideas, in addition to examples from the book.
- Create real world opportunities for exploration that relate to favorite books. For example, after reading Leo Lionni's *Little Blue and Little Yellow*, provide fingerpaint or playdough for mixing colors.

Concepts related to books – understanding that books have authors and illustrators, are called by titles and are made up of covers, spines, and pages.

To help children understand concepts related to books:

- Model and discuss these concepts as you share books with individual children, small groups of children, and the whole group.
- Help children make connections about favorite authors and illustrators. Can they begin to recognize the artistic styles of Kevin Henkes, Eric Carle, Gail Gibbons, or Mo Willems? Have they noticed that certain authors write in rhyme, while others do not?
- Provide homemade, blank books for children to write and draw in. As you talk with children about their work, make meaningful reference to concepts such as author, illustrator, illustration, text, and cover.

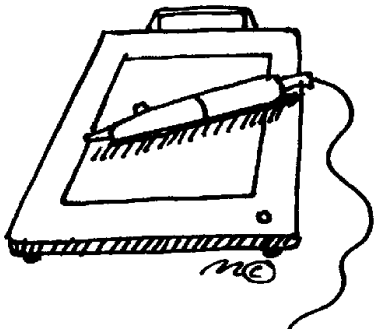
Concepts related to print – recognizing letters and making connections between letters and sounds. Later, recognizing words and reading sentences.

To build these skills:

- Read books that play with letter sounds, such as Shel Silverstein's *Runny Babbit* and *Cock-a-Doodle-Moo* by Bernard Most.
- Include a collection of fascinating alphabet books in your library area. Try *The Butterfly Alphabet* by Kjell Sandved and *Museum ABC* from the Metropolitan Museum of Art.
- Encourage children to help you with classroom writing tasks, such as making a grocery list in the dramatic play center. Call attention to the letters and sounds as you write or read.

- Offer to write dictations on children's artwork, and/or record children's stories.
- Display children's names and photos around the room.
- Create charts and graphs together that are related to topics of interest for the children.
- Include toys that allow children to play with letters and words, such as alphabet beads, magnetic letters, letter stamps, and games such as Boggle, Jr.

- Collect examples of environmental print, such as cereal box labels. Point out environmental print around children, such as exit signs in the building, or stop signs while on field trips.
- Provide many opportunities for children to use writing tools, such as clipboards and pencils, chalkboards and chalk, and blank paper booklets with crayons. Recognize and validate children's early efforts at writing.
- Create meaningful opportunities for mark making. For example, children who wish for a turn at the computer might write their names on a sign-up sheet.



- Model purposeful, "real life" reading and writing. Check the menu, write friendly notes to parents, and use the internet as a research tool. Make it clear to children that reading helps you find information you need, and writing helps you communicate ideas.

Teaching concepts through repeated readings of the same book

In *Using Children's Literature in Preschool to Develop Comprehension*, authors Morrow, Freitag, and Gambrell suggest the following framework for introducing new skills:

1. Explain the skill that is to be taught to children.

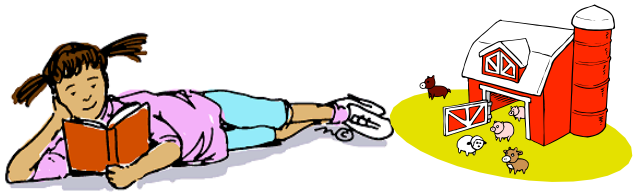
2. Model how to put the skill in practice.

3. Provide scaffolding for children through guided practice: Offer assistance if needed as children try to accomplish the task.

4. Provide time for children to practice the skill independently and to apply it in different contexts.

For example, if the teacher's goal is for children to recognize and predict rhyming words in the rebus story, *Inside a Barn in the County* by Alyssa Satin Cupucilli and Tedd Arnold, she might begin by asking them to listen carefully during the story for words that rhyme. As she reads, she may emphasize the rhyming words and provide narrative. After reading, "Here is the mouse that squeaked in the **hay** and woke up the horse that whinnied **neigh**", she might notice aloud, "*Hay-neigh*; they sound the same." As the story progresses, she may encourage children to begin to guess or echo rhyming sounds.

After an initial reading, the book may be read again, this time with each child holding a stick puppet of one of the farm animals, using the rhyme scheme of the book as their cue of when and how to make animal sounds. During yet another reading of the story, the teacher might make rebus chart with sentence strips, with blanks where some of the rhyming words belong. A small group of children can help find and place cards with the correct words to help fill in the blanks. These repeated exposures to the book and concepts may occur during brief morning and afternoon gatherings, or over the course of several days or weeks.



To allow children to practice the skills on their own, the teacher might make the stick puppets accessible to children for use during free play time, and the chart might also be displayed for independent use by children. Additional activities could include providing a copy of the story near a wooden barn play set, creating a recording of the book that includes pauses for children to guess the correct sounds for the listening center, and/or creating a flannel board or magnet board that correlates to the story. By carefully observing children at play, the teacher will be able to recognize ideal opportunities to work one-on-one with interested children, providing scaffolding to meet each child at his or her level.

Questions to consider:

- Do you ever read the same book to children more than once?
- If so, do you purposefully plan to scaffold children's literacy learning, helping them "dig deeper" into concepts with each reading?
- Do you plan cumulative, goal-oriented literacy activities for both small groups and larger groups of children?
- Are there opportunities for children to review and practice literacy concepts independently?

Story Extensions: Now, Next, and Later

For every great children's book, there is a song, cooking project, art experience, or science experiment just waiting to be discovered! Story extensions such as these generate enthusiasm about books and help children make connections between books and other areas of learning. Extensions can be small and simple, or as large as you have the time, energy, and creativity to make them!

Three quick tips for story extensions

1. Start with extensions for favorite books; you'll instantly have your group's attention when the extension is connected to a story they already love.

2. Integrate story extensions into your everyday classroom life, including breakfast time, center time, playground games, and so on. You don't need to schedule a specific "story extension time". In fact, it's more meaningful and authentic if you mesh story extensions into your regular activities.

3. A connection that seems very obvious to you may seem completely random to children. Don't forget to talk about the story and the book to help clearly draw the connection between the extending activity and the story that was shared earlier.

With these tips in mind, read on to find suggestions for quick and easy story extensions for several well-known picture books. For each book, you'll find three extensions:

One for ***now***, to draw children in as you read the story.

One for ***next*** – an activity that can be completed immediately after the story, or when children next go play.

And, one for ***later*** – an activity to share during another part of your day,

Blueberries for Sal by Robert McClosky

Now
In the story, the berries make a "kuplink-kuplank-kuplunk" sound as Sal drops them into her pail. As you read the story, drop blue or purple beads into a small metal pail for your own sound effects.
Next
Have some fresh blueberries or blueberry preserves to taste.
Later
Have the book, pail, and "berries" available to children as they retell the story on their own

Corduroy by Don Freeman

Now
Introduce children to a favorite teddy bear. If you plan ahead, read Corduroy on a day when children have been invited to bring their own special bears from home; bears can sit in children's laps as you read the story.
Next
Hide a collection of buttons around the room or playground for children to search for.

Later
Create a toy store prop box for dramatic play, including a collection of basic toys (ball, truck, teddy bear, etc.), cash register and play money, and paper sacks. Add buttons to your art area for collage, or to your fine motor area for sorting.

Good Night Gorilla by Peggy Rathmann

Now
Use a set of real keys to introduce the book. Jingle the keys to capture the children's attention, and ask who might have keys at the zoo. Ask children to keep a close eye out for the keys as you read the story.
Next
After the story, play "Who Took the Keys from the Zookeeper?" to the chanting tune of "Who Stole the Cookies from the Cookie Jar?"
Later
Add zoo-related props to your block building area, including a set of wooden or plastic zoo animals. Plastic berry baskets make fantastic animal cages, and cardstock, colored pencils, and tape will encourage children to make signs for their zoo.

The Popcorn Book by Tomie dePaola

Now
Before reading the story, bring out a basket of corn in its various forms – a fresh ear of corn, a dried ear of corn, and a jar of un-popp popcorn. Pass these around for children to examine and discuss.
Next
Use a hot air popper to make a batch of fresh popcorn.
Later
In the math or fine motor area, provide a bowl of dried corn in various colors – yellow, gold, and purple – for children to count, so and pattern. In the science area, provide ears of fresh and dried co..., along with magnifying glasses and tweezers.

RRRalph by Lois Ehlert

Now
Begin with a lively discussion of all of the different noises that dogs can make. If you have a dog puppet, use it to help facilitate this conversation.
Next
Call attention to Ehlert's unique collages using everyday objects. For example, Ralph's mouth is a zipper and his nose is a soda can tab. In your art area, provide a collection of "odds and ends", such as milk caps, paperclips, spools, rubber bands, and felt scraps, for kids to make their own collages.
Later
In your library area, provide a collection of Ehlert's collage books for children to explore, including *RRRalph*, *Snowballs*, *Leaf Man*, and *Nuts to You*.

The Snowy Day by Ezra Jack Keats

Now
Bring out a bowl of ice cubes or real snow for children to touch and talk about before you begin the story.
Next
After reading, make it "snow" indoors by adding white pompoms, cotton balls, or paper pieces to a parachute. Everyone can take an edge and shake, shake, shake to make the snow fly!
Later
If snow is available, scoop some into your water table or a large dish tub for children to explore. If real snow is not available, try instant snow powder (available at science supply stores) or rock salt.

Song and Dance Man by Karen Ackermann

Now
Play a tape of ragtime music or upbeat jazz to draw children to the story time area.
Next
Introduce pairs of tap shoes to your music area, or hot glue pennies to the soles of some old shoes to allow children to try tap dancing.
Later
Add more of Grandpa's props – a bowler hat, spectacles, a cane, and a pair of clip-on suspenders to your dramatic play area.

The Very Busy Spider by Eric Carle

Now
Capture children's attention with a toy spider in a bug box, or with a spider puppet.
Next
After reading the story, use a ball of yarn to create a large spider web. Kids can help "spin" the web by holding the yarn and tossing the ball across the circle.
Later
Show children how to make designs on paper with white glue. When the glue dries, raised lines will remain, much like the tactile spider web in the book. Try placing another sheet of paper on top to make crayon rubbings.

Mrs. Wishy Washy's Farm by Joy Cowley

Now
Before inviting children to the story reading area, dress up as Mrs. Wishy Washy by donning an apron and dish gloves and tying a bandana in your hair.
Next
Use flannel board figures, puppets, or a set of plastic animals to help you tell the tale.
Later
Have a tub of soapy water, scrub brushes, aprons, and a set of sturdy, plastic animals for children to "wash".

Authors on the Internet

Your group's favorite authors may have their own, kid-friendly WebPages. Here are a few to get you started:

Chris Van Allsburg
www.chrisvanallsburg.com – Scavenger hunt, video clips, screensaver and more

Dav Pilkey
www.pilkey.com – In Dave's words, "Junk, Stuff, and Thingies" – aka games, videos, music, and a cardmaker

David Weisner
www.hmhbooks.com/wiesner/ - discussion guides, and an Art and Max coloring program

Dr. Seuss
www.seussville.com - publisher's site with lots of games and activities for emergent readers

Gail Gibbons
www.gailgibbons.com – Gail's biography, plus free teacher's guides for using her books throughout the year

Jack Prelutsky
www.jackprelutsky.com - wonderful poems, plus "Letters to Jack"

Jan Brett
www.janbrett.com – printable masks, puppets, and more

Jean Marzollo
http://jeanmarzollo.com/ - free e-books, including Marzollo's *I Spy* books

Mem Fox
www.memfox.com - recordings of Mem reading and telling stories, plus "the stories behind the stories"

Mo WIllems
http://mowillemsdoodles.blogspot.com and www.mowillems.com – laugh out loud IFAQ (Infrequently Asked Questions), Tweets from the Pigeon, story generator, and more.

Robert Sabuda
www.robertsabuda.com - templates for making your own pop-up designs; too complex for preschoolers, but wonderful for school-agers and teachers

Shel Silverstein
www.shelsilverstein.com – amazing animations, a poem quiz, games, and e-cards

Home-school connections: let's share the reading bug!

The evidence is clear: when families with young children read together at home, children are more likely to become strong readers later in life. How can early childhood educators encourage healthy home reading habits? How do we help ensure that every family has access to high quality books to make reading together a reality?

Consider the following ways to foster a home-school literacy connection.

Create a classroom lending library
Create a system and a special place for families to check out favorite books, story bags, or literacy kits. The kits can include a book to read aloud and extension activities to help families explore themes related to the story. You can find ready-to-go kits for Pre-K and beyond at Reading Rockets:
www.readingrockets.org

Celebrate with stories
Chances are, families often come to your program for special events, such as open house and holiday parties. When teachers gather everyone together for a story time during these family events, they have a wonderful opportunity to model read-aloud skills for families. Parents get a chance to see how much their children enjoy books, and families can be introduced to favorite holiday stories.

Birthday books: a new tradition
Stock up on low-priced books from Scholastic.com or elsewhere. Place the books in a festive, gift-wrapped box and make a new tradition of allowing every birthday boy or girl select a book from the box to take home on his/her birthday. Staff members and classmates might sign their names and write a special birthday message inside the book's front cover on the child's special day.

Fast Facts: Reading at Home

According to the National Center for Education Statistics, young children who are read to at home three or four times each week reach these milestones more quickly:

- **Recognizing letters of the alphabet**
- **Writing own name**
- **Counting to 20 or higher**
- **Pretending to read; incorporating reading and writing into play**
- **Reading for real**

The Educational Testing Service found an interesting correlation:

The more types of reading materials are in the home (books, magazines, cookbooks, etc.), the higher elementary school students score in reading proficiency.

The US Department of Education reports:
In fourth grade classrooms where parent involvement is low, student test scores average 46 points below the national average.
Where parent involvement is high, scores average 28 points *above* the national average!

Books in the news
Include a recommended reading list in each newsletter that you send home. Suggest a handful of children's books that are:

- Age-appropriate
- Easy to read
- Readily available at your local library or bookstore
- Connected to an upcoming season, holiday, or classroom learning topic

Pages for parents
Children who see their parents reading later become more avid readers themselves. Consider recommended reading lists for parents, too. Newsletters can be a wonderful opportunity to introduce parents to resource books about guidance, child development, and ways to help children learn at home. You might even start a book club for parents, introducing and discussing important child development topics, including literacy!

Make it an event
Your program can participate in the National Education Association's *Read Across America*, or in Jumpstart's *Read for the Record*. Find out more at www.nea.org and www.readfortherecord.org. Or, host an author visit, organize a read-a-thon, or have a family book night. With a little planning, your program can organize a special event that will get children and families excited about reading.

Swap it up
New, fresh books can encourage children and families to read. Create a book swap box in your program's lobby or office, or even in the classroom sign-in area. Children can bring books they have outgrown or lost interest in to trade for something new.

Create a family book log
Parents and children can record books that they have read together on a classroom or hallway bulletin board. For example, each time they finish a new book together, families might record the title and author on a paper leaf to add to a tree, or on a paper star to add to a "night sky" board.

Books in every home
When there are few books in the home, family reading habits suffer. Early childhood programs can help by sending books home. When a child comes home excited about a new book in her backpack, her enthusiasm may spread to every member of the family!

On the following page, you'll find information on ways to find books for your families. Consider sending new books home at the beginning and end of the year, as holiday gifts, or even on a monthly basis.

Finding Books for Families

National book giveaway programs

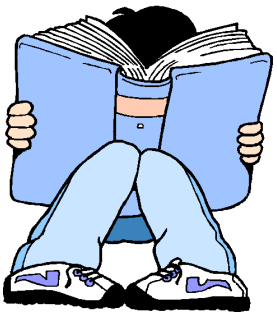
Dolly Parton's Imagination Library
www.imaginationlibrary.com

Dolly Parton's Imagination Library, developed in 1995 for her hometown of Sevier County, Tennessee, has been replicated in communities across the United States to bring books into the homes of preschool children. Through the program, all children in a participating community are enrolled at birth or when they move into the community.

Each month, from the day the child is born until their 5th birthday, a selected book arrives at the mailbox. The Dollywood Foundation has developed the delivery system, negotiated price, selected the publisher and the individual titles, and created registration and promotional materials. Local champions in the community — businesses, school districts, civic organizations, individuals, or local government — finance the cost of the books and the mailing, register the children and promote the program.

First Book
www.firstbook.org

First Book is a national nonprofit that has provided more than 50 million new books to children in need. In neighborhoods across the country, First Book unites leaders from all sectors of the community to identify and support community-based literacy programs reaching children living at or below the poverty line and provide them with grants of free books and educational materials. The First Book National Book Bank, a subsidiary of First Book, provides new books to children from low-income families using generous donations from children's book publishers. The First Book National Book Bank distributes large quantities of publisher-donated brand-new books to programs serving children from low-income families. There are 25 to 30 book distributions hosted by the First Book National Book Bank annually at a variety of sites across the United States. The books are free to programs that are able to pick them up or just $0.25 per book to have them shipped.



Lisa Libraries
www.lisalibraries.org

The Lisa Libraries provides new children's books to help fill bookshelves for small, grass-roots organizations that work with low-income children in underserved communities and provide books to children who may never have had books to call their own. Some of the libraries established have been at daycare centers, prison visiting areas for children of incarcerated parents, and after-school programs.

The Literacy Empowerment Foundation
www.lefbooks.org

The Literacy Empowerment Foundation (LEF) is dedicated to assisting educational programs by providing inexpensive children's books. The Reading Resource Project is an ongoing LEF program that distributes free books in sets of 100 books to literacy programs. Recipients pay shipping, handling, and administrative costs ($65 per set of 100 books). Reading levels are available for pre-K through second grade and are available in a limited quantity on a first come, first served basis.

Reading Is Fundamental (RIF)
www.rif.org

RIF, the nation's oldest and largest children's literacy organization, is most well known for its flagship service, Books for Ownership (formerly known as the National Book Program). Through this program, children choose and keep several free paperback books each year and participate in reading motivation activities. RIF serves children and families in schools, libraries, community centers, child care centers, Head Start and Even Start centers, hospitals, migrant worker camps, homeless shelters, and detention centers. To meet eligibility requirements for the federal funds that pay for 75% of book costs, at least 80% of children must be considered "at risk," as defined by the National Literacy Act of 1991 and participate in the Federal Free and Reduced Meal program.

Local sources: more ways to connect children with books

Book Drives

Ask local churches, scout groups, or service groups to sponsor a book drive to collect gently used children's books for your organization. You might also ask local shopkeepers and places of business to place a donation drop box in their lobbies.

Freecycle and Reusit Groups

These online community sites are dedicated to reducing trash by finding new homes for items that are still useable. Membership is free, and child care programs can request donations of gently used children's books and magazines. As with any public, online interactions safety measures should be taken, such as meeting in a high traffic, public place to receive the books from a donor. Find out more at www.freecycle.org and www.reusit.org.

Local Stores and Libraries

Contact your local public libraries, bookstores, and toy stores. They may be willing to donate or sell at a discount older, lightly damaged, or overstocked books that they carry. You may even be able to create an ongoing partnership so they will regularly set aside books for your group.

Wish Lists

Whenever you send out a newsletter or e-mail, include a Wish List of the books you'd like donated. This makes an especially effective appeal during the holidays. Or go "high tech" by using the Wish List feature on Amazon.com or Barnes and Noble.

Public Television Stations

Each month, participating public television stations distribute free books to their local partner organizations, which then make them available to children who otherwise would not have books of their own.

Online options: Free E-books for young readers

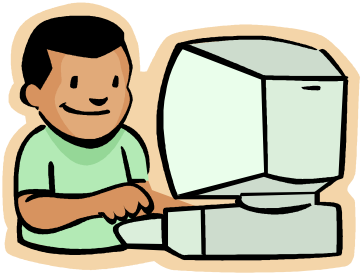
International Children's Digital Library (ICDL)
www.childrenslibrary.org

The non-profit ICDL Foundation's library has evolved into the world's largest digital collection of children's books. Currently its digital library comprises over 1,500 books in 37 different languages. Because books on this site are collected from many sources and suited to a diverse range of ages, pre-reading by an adult to ensure suitability is needed before sharing the books with children.

Project Gutenberg
www.gutenberg.org

Project Gutenberg is the largest single collection of free electronic books. Their goal is to provide as many eBooks in as many formats as possible for the entire world to read in as many languages as possible. There are more than 20,000 free books in the Project Gutenberg Online Book Catalog.

Tumble Book Library
www.tumblebooks.com

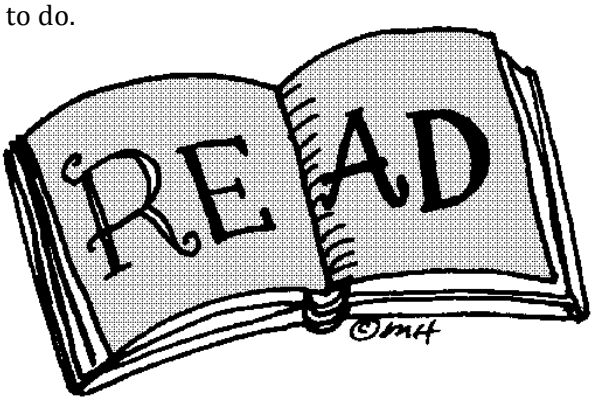


Tumble Book Library is an online collection of children's favorite story books, such as *How I Became a Pirate*, *One Duck Stuck*, and *Tops and Bottoms*, all with added animation, sound, music and narration. The Tumble Book Library is a subscription service, but offers a free one-month trial for librarians, media specialists, teachers and school administrators that provides unlimited access for everyone in your school.

An author's tips for parents

(Author Mem Fox's *Ten Read Aloud Commandments*, used with permission, are wonderful tips for teachers, as well!)

1. Spend at least ten wildly happy minutes *every single day* reading aloud.
2. Read at least three stories a day: it may be the same story three times. Children need to hear a thousand stories before they can begin to learn to read.
3. Read aloud with animation. Listen to your own voice and don't be dull, or flat, or boring. Hang loose and be loud, have fun and laugh a lot.
4. Read with joy and enjoyment: real enjoyment for yourself and great joy for the listeners.
5. Read the stories that the kids love, over and over and over again, and always read in the same "tune" for each book: i.e. with the same intonations on each page, each time.
6. Let children hear lots of language by talking to them constantly about the pictures, or anything else connected to the book; or sing any old song that you can remember; or say nursery rhymes in a bouncy way; or be noisy together doing clapping games.
7. Look for rhyme, rhythm or repetition in books for young children, and make sure the books are really short.
8. Play games with the things that you and the child can see on the page, such as letting kids finish rhymes, and finding the letters that start the child's name and yours, remembering that it's never work, it's always a fabulous game.
9. Never ever *teach* reading, or get tense around books.
10. Please read aloud every day, mums and dads, because you just love being with your child, not just because it's the right thing to do.



Did you know that children's encounters with early literacy prior to kindergarten can have a lasting impact on future school success? Children who do not have high quality, age-appropriate, literacy experiences in the early childhood years are more likely to need future support to develop literacy skills.
Source: Nueman, Susan B. *Learning to Read and Write: Developmentally Appropriate Practices For Young Children*. NAEYC, 2000.)

On the next few pages, you'll find tip sheets for families with children from infancy to third grade. They're from Reading Rockets (www.readingrockets.org), and permission has been granted for you to make copies to share with your families.

READING rockets

www.ReadingRockets.org

TIPS for parents of Babies

It's never too early to read to your baby. As soon as your baby is born, he or she starts learning. Just by talking to, playing with, and caring for your baby every day, you help your baby develop language skills necessary to become a reader. By reading with your baby, you foster a love of books and reading right from the start. The tips below offer some fun ways you can help your child become a happy and confident reader. Try a new tip each week. See what works best for your child.

- **Snuggle up with a book**
  When you hold your baby close and look at a book together, your baby will enjoy the snuggling and hearing your voice as well as the story. Feeling safe and secure with you while looking at a book builds your baby's confidence and love of reading.

- **Choose baby-friendly books**
  Books with bright and bold or high-contrast illustrations are easier for young babies to see, and will grab their attention. Books made of cloth or soft plastic (for the bathtub) or "board books" with sturdy cardboard pages are easier for a baby to handle.

- **Keep books where your baby can reach them**
  Make sure books are as easy to reach, hold, and look at as toys. Remember, a baby will do with a book what he does with everything else—put it in his mouth. And that's exactly what he's supposed to do, so you may only want to put chewable books within reach.

- **Talk with your baby—all day long**
  Describe the weather or which apples you are choosing at the grocery. Talk about the pictures in a book or things you see on a walk. Ask questions. By listening, your child learns words, ideas, and how language works.

- **Encourage your baby's coos, growls, and gurgles**
  They are your baby's way of communicating with you, and are important first steps toward speech. Encourage attempts to mimic you. The more your baby practices making sounds, the clearer they will become. Go ahead and moo, woof and honk!

- **Give baby a hand!**
  Encourage your baby to pick up crackers or peas, touch noses and toes, point to pictures and grab toys. The muscles in those little hands will grow strong, agile, and ready to turn pages.

- **Develop a daily routine (and make reading a part of it)**
  Routines can soothe a baby, and let a baby learn to predict what will happen next. The ability to predict is important when your child is older and is reading independently.

- **Sing, Read, Repeat**
  Read favorite stories and sing favorite songs over and over again. Repeated fun with books will strengthen language development and positive feelings about reading.

- **"Read" your baby**
  Pay attention to how your baby reacts to the book you are reading. Stop if your baby isn't enjoying the story and try another book or another time.

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TIPS for parents of Toddlers

Being a toddler is all about ACTION. Encourage continued language development and interest in books and reading by keeping things lively and engaging. Everyday experiences are full of opportunities to engage in conversation and develop language skills. The tips below offer some fun ways you can help your child become a happy and confident reader. Try a new tip each week. See what works best for your child.

- **Don't expect your toddler to sit still for a book**

  Toddlers need to MOVE, so don't worry if they act out stories or just skip, romp, or tumble as you read to them. They may be moving, but they are listening.

- **Recite rhymes, sing songs, and make mistakes!**

  Pause to let your toddler finish a phrase or chant a refrain. Once your toddler is familiar with the rhyme or pattern, make mistakes on purpose and get caught.

- **Choose engaging books**

  Books featuring animals or machines invite movement and making sounds. Books with flaps or different textures to touch keep hands busy. Books with detailed illustrations or recurring items hidden in the pictures are great for exploring and discussing.

- **Keep reading short, simple, and often**

  Toddlers frequently have shorter attention spans than babies. Look for text that is short and simple. Read a little bit, several times a day.

- **Encourage play that involves naming, describing, and communicating**

  Set up a zoo with all the stuffed animals. Stage a race with the toy cars. Put your toddler in charge and ask lots of questions.

- **Every day is an adventure when you're a toddler**

  Choose books about everyday experiences and feelings. Your child will identify with the characters as they dress, eat, visit, nap, and play.

- **Ask questions**

  Take time to listen to your toddler's answers. Toddlers have strong opinions and interesting ideas about the world. Encourage your toddler to tell you what he or she thinks. You'll build language skills and learn what makes your toddler tick at the same time.

- **Play to their favorites**

  Read favorite stories again and again. Seek out books about things your toddler especially likes—trains, animals, the moon. These books may extend a toddler's attention span and build enthusiasm for reading.

- **Not having fun?**

  Try a different story or a different time during the day. Reading with a very young child is primarily about building positive experiences with books, not finishing every book you start.

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TIPS for parents of Preschoolers

Read early and read often. The early years are critical to developing a lifelong love of reading. It's never too early to begin reading to your child! The tips below offer some fun ways you can help your child become a happy and confident reader. Try a new tip each week. See what works best for your child.

- **Read together every day.**
  Read to your child every day. Make this a warm and loving time when the two of you can cuddle close.
- **Give everything a name.**
  Build your child's vocabulary by talking about interesting words and objects. For example, "Look at that airplane! Those are the wings of the plane. Why do you think they are called wings?"
- **Say how much you enjoy reading.**
  Tell your child how much you enjoy reading with him or her. Talk about "story time" as the favorite part of your day.
- **Read with fun in your voice.**
  Read to your child with humor and expression. Use different voices. Ham it up!
- **Know when to stop.**
  Put the book away for awhile if your child loses interest or is having trouble paying attention.
- **Be interactive.**
  Discuss what's happening in the book, point out things on the page, and ask questions.
- **Read it again and again.**
  Go ahead and read your child's favorite book for the 100th time!
- **Talk about writing, too.**
  Mention to your child how we read from left to right and how words are separated by spaces.
- **Point out print everywhere.**
  Talk about the written words you see in the world around you. Ask your child to find a new word on each outing.
- **Get your child evaluated.**
  Please be sure to see your child's pediatrician or teacher as soon as possible if you have concerns about your child's language development, hearing, or sight.

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TIPS for parents of Kindergartners

Play with letters, words, and sounds! Having fun with language helps your child learn to crack the code of reading. The tips below offer some fun ways you can help your child become a happy and confident reader. Try a new tip each week. See what works best for your child.

- **Talk to your child.**
  Ask your child to talk about his day at school. Encourage him to explain something they did, or a game he played during recess.

- **Say silly tongue twisters.**
  Sing songs, read rhyming books, and say silly tongue twisters. These help kids become sensitive to the sounds in words.

- **Read it and experience it.**
  Connect what your child reads with what happens in life. If reading a book about animals, relate it to your last trip to the zoo.

- **Use your child's name.**
  Point out the link between letters and sounds. Say, "John, the word *jump* begins with the same sound as your name. *John, jump.* And they both begin with the same letter, J."

- **Play with puppets.**
  Play language games with puppets. Have the puppet say, "My name is *Mark.* I like words that rhyme with my name. Does *park* rhyme with *Mark*? Does *ball* rhyme with *Mark*?"

- **Trace and say letters.**
  Have your child use a finger to trace a letter while saying the letter's sound. Do this on paper, in sand, or on a plate of sugar.

- **Write it down.**
  Have paper and pencils available for your child to use for writing. Working together, write a sentence or two about something special. Encourage your child to use the letters and sounds he or she is learning about in school.

- **Play sound games.**
  Practice blending sounds into words. Ask "Can you guess what this word is? *m - o - p*." Hold each sound longer than normal.

- **Read it again and again.**
  Go ahead and read your child's favorite book for the 100th time! As you read, pause and ask your child about what is going on in the book.

- **Talk about letters and sounds.**
  Help your child learn the names of the letters and the sounds the letters make. Turn it into a game! "I'm thinking of a letter and it makes the sound mmmmmm."

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TIPS for parents of First Graders

Give your child lots of opportunities to read aloud. Inspire your young reader to practice every day! The tips below offer some fun ways you can help your child become a happy and confident reader. Try a new tip each week. See what works best for your child.

- **Don't leave home without it.**
  Bring along a book or magazine any time your child has to wait, such as at a doctor's office. Always try to fit in reading!
- **Once is not enough.**
  Encourage your child to re-read favorite books and poems. Re-reading helps kids read more quickly and accurately.
- **Dig deeper into the story.**
  Ask your child questions about the story you've just read. Say something like, "Why do you think Clifford did that?"
- **Take control of the television.**
  It's difficult for reading to compete with TV and video games. Encourage reading as a free-time activity.
- **Be patient.**
  When your child is trying to sound out an unfamiliar word, give him or her time to do so. Remind your child to look closely at the first letter or letters of the word.
- **Pick books that are at the right level.**
  Help your child pick books that are not too difficult. The aim is to give your child lots of successful reading experiences.
- **Play word games.**
  Have your child sound out the word as you change it from *mat* to *fat* to *sat;* from *sat* to *sag* to *sap;* and from *sap* to *sip*.
- **I read to you, you read to me.**
  Take turns reading aloud at bedtime. Kids enjoy this special time with their parents.
- **Gently correct your young reader.**
  When your child makes a mistake, gently point out the letters he or she overlooked or read incorrectly. Many beginning readers will guess wildly at a word based on its first letter.
- **Talk, talk, talk!**
  Talk with your child every day about school and things going on around the house. Sprinkle some interesting words into the conversation, and build on words you've talked about in the past.
- **Write, write, write!**
  Ask your child to help you write out the grocery list, a thank you note to Grandma, or to keep a journal of special things that happen at home. When writing, encourage your child to use the letter and sound patterns he or she is learning at school.

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TIPS for parents of Second Graders

Find ways to read, write, and tell stories together with your child. Always applaud your young reader and beginning story writer! The tips below offer some fun ways you can help your child become a happy and confident reader. Try a new tip each week. See what works best for your child.

- **Tell family tales.**
  Children love to hear stories about their family. Talk about a funny thing that happened when you were young.

- **Create a writing toolbox.**
  Fill a box with drawing and writing materials. Find opportunities for your child to write, such as the shopping list, thank you notes, or birthday cards.

- **Be your child's #1 fan.**
  Ask your child to read aloud what he or she has written for school. Be an enthusiastic listener.

- **One more time with feeling.**
  When your child has sounded out an unfamiliar word, have him or her re-read that sentence. Often kids are so busy figuring out a word they lose the meaning of what they've just read.

- **Invite an author to class.**
  Ask an author to talk to your child's class about the writing process. Young children often think they aren't smart enough if they can't sit down and write a perfect story on the first try.

- **Create a book together.**
  Fold pieces of paper in half and staple them to make a book. Ask your child to write sentences on each page and add his or her own illustrations.

- **Do storytelling on the go.**
  Take turns adding to a story the two of you make up while riding in a car or bus. Try making the story funny or spooky.

- **Point out the relationship between words.**
  Explain how related words have similar spellings and meanings. Show how a word like *know*ledge, for example, relates to a word like *know.*

- **Use a writing checklist.**
  Have your child create a writing checklist with reminders such as, "Do all of my sentences start with a capital? Yes/No."

- **Quick, quick.**
  Use new words your child has learned in lively flash card or computer drills. Sometimes these help kids automatically recognize and read words, especially those that are used frequently.

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TIPS for parents of Third Graders

Read about it, talk about it, and think about it! Find ways for your child to build understanding, the ultimate goal of learning how to read. The tips below offer some fun ways you can help your child become a happy and confident reader. Try a new tip each week. See what works best for your child.

- **Make books special.**
  Turn reading into something special. Take your kids to the library, help them get their own library card, read with them, and buy them books as gifts. Have a favorite place for books in your home or, even better, put books everywhere.

- **Get them to read another one.**
  Find ways to encourage your child to pick up another book. Introduce him or her to a series like *The Boxcar Children* or *The Magic Tree House* or to a second book by a favorite author, or ask the librarian for additional suggestions.

- **Crack open the dictionary.**
  Let your child see you use a dictionary. Say, "Hmm, I'm not sure what that word means… I think I'll look it up."

- **Talk about what you see and do.**
  Talk about everyday activities to build your child's background knowledge, which is crucial to listening and reading comprehension. Keep up a running patter, for example, while cooking together, visiting somewhere new, or after watching a TV show.

- **First drafts are rough.**
  Encourage your child when writing. Remind him or her that writing involves several steps. No one does it perfectly the first time.

- **Different strokes for different folks.**
  Read different types of books to expose your child to different types of writing. Some kids, especially boys, prefer nonfiction books.

- **Teach your child some "mind tricks".**
  Show your child how to summarize a story in a few sentences or how to make predictions about what might happen next. Both strategies help a child comprehend and remember.

- **"Are we there yet?"**
  Use the time spent in the car or bus for wordplay. Talk about how jam means something you put on toast as well as cars stuck in traffic. How many other homonyms can your child think of? When kids are highly familiar with the meaning of a word, they have less difficulty reading it.

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