

Ideas for Promoting Early Literacy with Your Children

Make literacy engagements with print a part of your home and family routine.

- Engage your children in helping to write a grocery list. Write the items down in a numbered list and ask them to help by copying letters. As they print the name of an item such as “milk,” say the letters out loud: “m-i-l-k.” Point to the letters of the word as you speak.
- Use your list as the basis for a scavenger hunt within the kitchen, and ask the children to help find the items on the list.
- Talk about how things are grouped — for example, cold things (e.g., meats and dairy products that go into the fridge) and canned and bagged food that may be kept in a cupboard. Doing this helps children to notice how we sort and classify items.
- Help your children to read their world, as well, by pointing out words and letters everywhere you can. Read traffic signs, billboards, logos, store signs, and more. Point out specific letters in each sign.
- Ask your children to begin naming common signs and to find some letters. While passing a McDonald’s sign, for example, ask, “What letter does this word start with?”
- Ask your children to identify words and letters noticed while you are driving. For example, play I Spy while making obvious use of the alphabet so that they will look around the environment for something whose word begins with the asked-for letter.
- Ask guiding questions to engage children in conversations that promote early literacy awareness:
 1. How do you know that says “Skittles”? How do you know that says “Walmart”?
 2. What letter do you see at the beginning?
 3. What sound does the letter S make?
 4. Do you recognize any other letters in that logo?
 5. Can you find another logo that begins with the same letter?
 6. Do those words begin with the same sound?
 7. Are any of those letters in your own name?

Helpful websites for encouraging literacy skills

Used in moderation and with parental supervision, sites such as these can provide a constructive supplement to efforts such as those outlined above. As with all things Web related, first explore any site thoroughly. Ensure that the content is positive and that games are age appropriate.

- Click on a letter in the alphabet to see a picture of that letter and hear its sounds.
<http://www.learningplanet.com/act/fl/aact/alphastart.swf>
- Check out the Children’s Digital Library.
<http://www.storyplace.org/>
- This site helps to inspire a love of reading and writing.
<http://www.starfall.com/>
- Enjoy games, coloring, videos, and music, and visit sites about the child’s favorite cartoon characters! Visits help children learn letters, build words, make sentences, and expand vocabulary.
<http://pbskids.org/>
- The website of the popular educational TV show offers many simple and interesting games that take a basic look at letters, words, and numbers.
<http://www.sesamestreet.org/home>