

Building Literacy

Talk often with your child to build listening and speaking skills.

- Talk with your child often to build listening, speaking, and vocabulary skills—as you eat together, shop for groceries, walk to school, or wait for a bus.
- Ask questions that will encourage her to talk, and not just give yes or no responses.
- Have your child use his imagination to make up and tell you stories. Ask questions that will encourage him to expand the stories.
- Listen to your child's questions patiently and answer them just as patiently.
- Pay attention to how much television your child is watching. Limit TV time; set aside "no TV" time each day and use that time to talk or read together.
- Tell stories about your childhood.

Show your child how books and print work.

- Have your child point out such things as front and back covers of the book and the title as you read with him.
- Have him show you where you should start reading on a page.
- Help your child make connections between print and pictures as you read.

Focus your child's attention on the sounds of spoken language.

- Sing or say nursery rhymes and songs.
- Play word games (for example, "How many words can you say that rhyme with *feet*? With *say*?").
- Identify, when riding in the car, how many things you can see that start with a certain letter (for example, street, sign, sky, stripe, store).
- Read a story or poem and ask your child to listen for words that begin with the same sound (such as /b/ in boy). Have her say the words. Then have her say another word that begins with that sound.
- Stop and say a simple word as you read. Have your child say the sounds in the word, write the letters for the sounds, and then read what he wrote (for example, "The dog is big. Can you say the sounds in big? Now can you write the letters for the sounds? Good. Now read the word to me.").

Have your child identify and name the letters of the alphabet.

- Point out letters and have your child name them.
- Make an alphabet book with your child. Have him draw pictures or cut pictures from magazines or use old photos of persons, places, animals, toys, or other objects that begin with the various letters of the alphabet.



Support and reinforce what your child is learning in school about the relationship between letters and sounds.

- Point out labels, boxes, newspapers, magazines, and signs that display words with letter-sound relationships.
- Listen to your child read words and books from school. Be patient and listen as your child practices. Let your child know you are proud of what she is learning.
- Play word games. On cards, write words that contain the letter-sound relationships he is learning at school. Take turns choosing a card and blending the sounds to make the word. Then use the word in a sentence.

Encourage your child to spell and write.

- Encourage your child when he is writing to spell words by using what he knows about sounds and letters.
- Encourage your child to write notes, e-mails, and letters to family members and friends.
- Point out words that have similar spellings, such as *hop* and *pop* as you are reading with your child. Ask her to write similar words (for example, *top*, *mop*, and *cop*).
- Encourage your child to write often (for example, letters and thank-you notes, simple stories, and grocery lists).

Help your child build vocabulary, knowledge of the world, and comprehension.

- Pause occasionally as you read aloud to ask about the meaning of the book.
- Help make connections between a child's life and what's happening in the book. Explain new ideas and words to her.
- Encourage your child to ask questions about the book. Ask him to tell in his own words what the book was about.

