EVERY CHILD READY TO READ

What is Early Literacy?

Early literacy is what children know about reading and writing *before* they can actually read and write. Research shows that children get ready to read years before they start school. You can help your four- and five-year old learn important skills *now* so they can become good readers.

Why parents are so important in helping their children get ready to read:

- You know your children best.
- Children learn best when they are in a good mood, and you know their moods best.
- You can help your children learn reading skills in ways that are easiest for them.
- Children learn best by doing things—and they love doing things with you. Take every chance you have to read with your children, talk about stories, sing songs and play word games.

Ask your public library for the names of books to read to four- and five-year-olds.

Ask about library programs that you and your child can enjoy together.

THE EARLY LITERACY INITIATIVE
A PARTNERSHIP AMONG THE PUBLIC LIBRARY ASSOCIATION,
THE ASSOCIATION FOR LIBRARY SERVICE TO CHILDREN, AND
THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF CHILD HEALTH & HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

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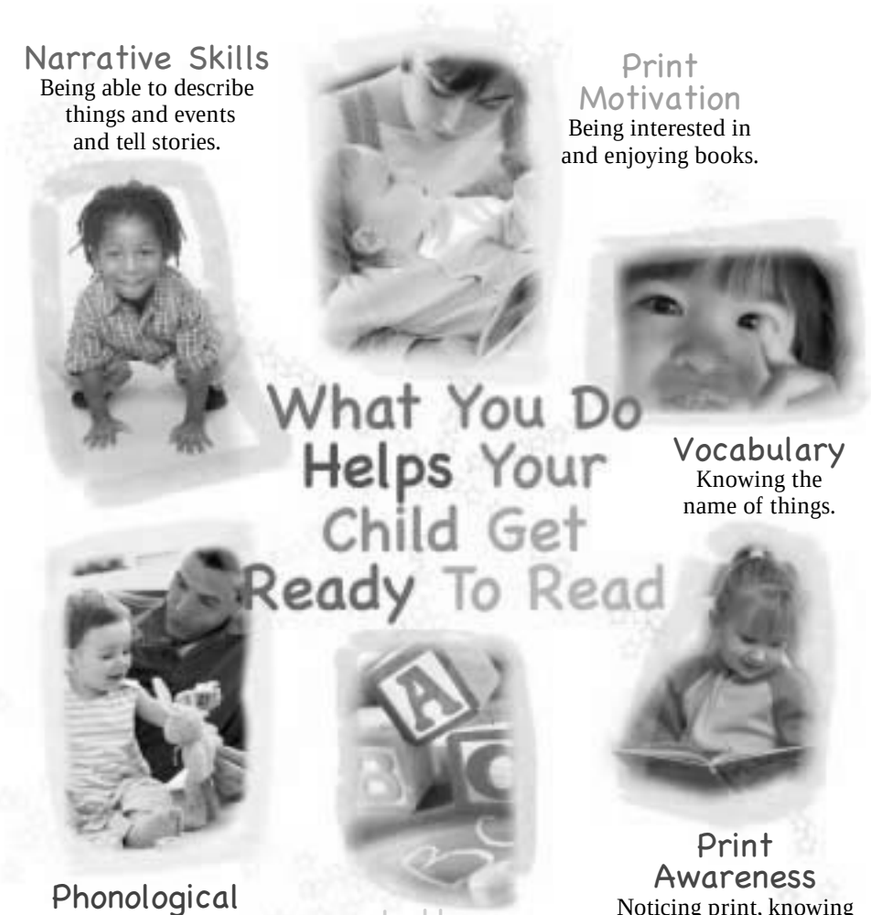
Parent Guide to Early Literacy for Pre-Readers: Four- and Five-Year-Olds

EVERY CHILD READY TO READ

Six Pre-Reading Skills your child can start learning from birth!



Narrative Skills
Being able to describe things and events and tell stories.

Print Motivation
Being interested in and enjoying books.

Vocabulary
Knowing the name of things.

Phonological Awareness
Being able to hear and play with the smaller sounds in words.

Letter Knowledge
Knowing letters are different from each other, knowing their names and sounds and recognizing letters everywhere.

Print Awareness
Noticing print, knowing how to handle a book and knowing how to follow the words on a page.

A

According to research, there are six pre-reading skills that children must learn in order to learn to read.

Activities you do to support each of these skills will change as your child grows.

B

Every Child Ready to Read @ your library is a project of the Public Library Association and the Association for Library Service to Children, divisions of the American Library Association.
www.pla.org
www.ala.org/alsc

C

Every Child Ready To Read @ your library
www.pla.org/earlyliteracy.htm

WHAT CAN I DO TO HELP?

Learning words begins at birth and grows throughout a child's life. Most children start school knowing between 3,000 and 5,000 words.

Vocabulary

- Talk with your child about what is going on around you. Talk about how things work, feelings and ideas.
- When your child talks with you, add more detail to what she says.
- Speak in the language that is most comfortable for you.
- Read together every day. When you talk about the story and pictures, your child hears and learns more words.
- Learn together by reading some true books on subjects that your child likes.
- ***Research shows that children who have larger vocabularies are better readers. Knowing many words helps children recognize written words and understand what they read.***

Print Motivation

- Make book-sharing time a special time for closeness between you and your child.
- Let your child see you reading.
- Visit your public library often.
- ***Children who enjoy books will want to learn how to read.***

Narrative Skills

- Listen to your child carefully when he talks.
- Ask your child to tell you about something that happened. Let him tell you about a picture he drew.
- Share books together.
- Stories help children understand that things happen in order—first, next, last.
- Read a book together that your child already knows. Switch what you do. You be the listener and let your child tell you the story.
- Ask "what" questions. Point to a picture and say, "What's that?" or "What is happening here?"
- Add to what your child says. If your child says, "big truck" then you say, "Yes, a big red fire truck."
- Ask open-ended questions like, "What do you think is happening in this picture?"
- Help your child relate what is happening in the story to her own experience, for example, "What happened when we went on a picnic?"
- ***Being able to tell or retell a story helps children understand what they read.***

Print Awareness

- Read aloud everyday print—labels, signs, lists, menus. Print is everywhere!
- Point to some of the words as you say them, especially words that are repeated.
- Let your child turn the pages.
- Let your child hold the book and read or tell the story.
- Hold the book upside down. See if your child turns the book around.
- ***Being familiar with printed language helps children feel comfortable with books and understand that print is useful.***

Letter Knowledge

- Write your child's name.
- Make letters from clay or use magnetic letters.
- Point out and name letters when reading alphabet books, signs or labels.
- Show your child that the same letter can look different.
- Write words that interest your child (like "dinosaur" or "truck") using crayons, magnetic letters or pencil and paper.
- ***Knowing the names and sounds of letters helps children figure out how to say written words.***

Phonological Awareness

Most children who have an understanding of phonological awareness have an easier time learning to read. Help your pre-reader become aware of the smaller sounds that make up words.

- Ask whether two words rhyme: "Do 'cat' and 'dog' rhyme?" "Do 'cat' and 'hat' rhyme?"
- Say words with word chunks left out: "What word would we have if you took the 'hot' away from 'hotdog'?"
- Put two word chunks together to make a word: "What word would we have if we put 'cow' and 'boy' together?"
- Say words with sounds left out: "What word would we have if we took the 'buh' sound away from 'bat'?"
- Say rhymes and make up your own silly, nonsense rhymes together.
- Sing songs. Songs have different notes for each syllable in a word.
- Read some poetry together. Make up short poems together. Say the words that rhyme.
- Say rhymes and sing songs in the language most comfortable for you.

Have fun!

Most children who have difficulty reading have trouble with phonological awareness.