

Activities that Encourage Talking

Storytelling Starters

Telling stories is a wonderful way to increase children's vocabulary. As you tell a story, use new words and explain what they mean, or talk about something your child hasn't experienced and explain what happens. Here are some tips. Remember that almost any story you tell your child will be of interest—just because you are the one telling it!

- For infants and toddlers, start with silly sounds. Children delight in mimicking the sounds you make. This is just the beginning of having conversations with your child.
- Tell your child how you felt the day he or she was born.
- Tell a story about your childhood. Children have a great interest in hearing about experiences their parents had at a similar age.
- Use simple props such as a puppet or a stuffed animal to tell a story. Use silly voices for different characters and ask your child to join in.
- Use family photos to tell different stories.
- Make a book by clipping photos from magazines. Use them to tell an imaginary tale.
- Encourage your child to tell a story about a favorite event, or act it out.

Wordless Books

Wordless picture books give children the opportunity to tell the stories themselves. In telling their stories, children develop language skills and also get a sense of sequence of events in stories. Here are a few to get you started:

The Treasure Bath by Dan Andreasen
E ANDREASEN

Small, Medium & Large by Jane Donovan
E DONOVAN

Wave by Suzy Lee
E LEE

Chalk by Bill Thomson
E THOMSON

A Ball for Daisy by Chris Raschka
E CALDECOTT SHELF RASCHKA

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Overview

Whether your child is four days old or four years old, it is not too early or too late to help him or her develop important literacy and pre-reading skills. Doing this now will make it easier for your child to learn to read when he or she starts school.

Five of the best ways to help your child get ready to read are

- Talking
- Singing
- Reading
- Writing
- Playing

These practices are easy to do with children of all ages and can be done at home, at the doctor's office, in the car, or anywhere you and your child spend time together.

This handout's focus is on talking.



Talk, Talk, Talk!

Children learn about language by listening to parents talk and joining in the conversation. Conversations between parents and children are one of the best ways to help children learn new information and new words. Make sure your child has lots of opportunities to talk with you, not just listen to you talk. Respond to what your child says, and follow his or her lead.

If English is not your first language, speak to your child in the language you know best. This allows you to explain things to your child more fluently. Your child will be able to translate what he or she knows later, rather than having to learn both the concept and the English word at the same time.

One way to help children learn more from a conversation is to repeat a child's request or comment and paraphrase it. You also can expand on your child's comments and stretch out the conversation with additional explanations.

Use new words. Good readers have a large vocabulary. Knowing lots of words helps children better understand what they read.

Take turns. Children are just beginning to learn to have a conversation. It is important

for parents to ask questions and listen to what children say in response.

Make connections. Recalling past events and connecting them to current and future activities helps children develop an understanding that language can represent events that are not happening now.

Places to Talk

Conversations help a child express thoughts, learn what words mean, and gain new information about the world. Any place is a good place to talk with your child. All you need is to take the time and ignore any distractions. Listen to what your child says, answer questions, add new information, and listen some more!

Ten chances to chat during the day include:

- Morning routines
- In the car
- Waiting in a line
- Before a nap
- During meals
- Doing household chores
- At the store
- During bath time
- Before bedtime
- Out on a walk