

Literacy ~ on the ~ Go!

Tips, ideas, and activities that help
encourage early literacy for busy
families . . . on the go!



Whether you are headed across the state to visit relatives or across town to the grocery store, these simple brain-building activities will help increase your child's early literacy skills and can be a fun way to pass the time. If any of these activities seem too difficult or boring for your child, try again another time!

The National Research Council recommends that children enter school with these six early literacy skills that serve as the foundation for learning to read and write. Children who enter school with more of these skills are better able to benefit from the reading instruction they receive when they arrive at school.

Your public library has other resources for more things you can do to reinforce these skills and make reading an enjoyable time for you and your child.



EARLY LITERACY

Narrative Skills

Tell stories together, encourage pretend play, and let your child be a storyteller.

Letter Knowledge

Help your child identify the first letter in his/her name and find it on street signs and package labels.

Print Awareness

Help your child discover how to hold a book and turn the pages. Show them that print is all around them.

Vocabulary

Teach your child the specific name of things, like the different vegetables at the grocery store.

Print Motivation

Find books that match your child's interests and share them often.

Phonological Awareness

Sing songs, play games and share rhymes to help your child play with the smaller sounds in words.

FUN GAMES FOR THE CAR OR ANYWHERE

These games help build letter knowledge.

Find it A to Z

Search for billboards, signs, license plates, etc. that contain the letter A. Then the search is on for B, next C and so forth until you come to Z. This can be a cooperative game, with everyone in the family searching for the next letter in the alphabet. You can also play different versions of Find It, by seeing who can find the most out-of-state license plates, pick-up trucks etc. in the next five miles.

*-Adapted from Games for Reading: Playful Ways to Help Your Child Ready
by Peggy Kaye*



Edible ABCs

Think of food words for each letter of the alphabet. Take turns naming something delicious to eat for each letter, this may take some creativity for letters like X and Z (try x-ray fish and zucchini).

Name Game

Parent and child take turns, each giving the name of a boy or girl as you start with the letter “A” and continue through the alphabet to the letter “Z”.

TRIP TIP

Pack some drawing boards such as Magna Doodles, Etch-A-Sketch, and small white boards with dry erase markers. Try using pipe cleaners, bag ties, or aluminum foil so kids can make letters, flowers, animals, and all kinds of fun sculptures. Pack a small cookie sheet and take magnetic letters for them to play with (older children might like to use the cookie sheet to play cards or other games on).

License Plate Game

To play the “License Plate Game,” see how many different license plates you can find. Works as a team in the car or individually. You might even write down the time, date and the state where you saw it. This can be a family project as you build your “collection” of license plates sightings together.



BONUS!

Find plates from Canada, Mexico, or the US Territories. If you have older children, see how many state capitals they know for a bonus round!

FUNNY “VANITY” PLATES WE SAW:

- ☐ Alabama
- ☐ Alaska
- ☐ Arizona
- ☐ Arkansas
- ☐ California
- ☐ Colorado
- ☐ Connecticut
- ☐ Delaware
- ☐ Florida
- ☐ Georgia
- ☐ Hawaii
- ☐ Idaho
- ☐ Illinois
- ☐ Indiana
- ☐ Iowa
- ☐ Kansas
- ☐ Kentucky

- ☐ Louisiana
- ☐ Maine
- ☐ Maryland
- ☐ Massachusetts
- ☐ Michigan
- ☐ Minnesota
- ☐ Mississippi
- ☐ Missouri
- ☐ Montana
- ☐ Nebraska
- ☐ Nevada
- ☐ New Hampshire
- ☐ New Jersey
- ☐ New Mexico
- ☐ New York
- ☐ North Carolina
- ☐ North Dakota

- ☐ Ohio
- ☐ Oklahoma
- ☐ Oregon
- ☐ Pennsylvania
- ☐ Rhode Island
- ☐ South Carolina
- ☐ South Dakota
- ☐ Tennessee
- ☐ Texas
- ☐ Utah
- ☐ Vermont
- ☐ Virginia
- ☐ Washington
- ☐ Washington DC
- ☐ West Virginia
- ☐ Wisconsin
- ☐ Wyoming

IT'S RHYME TIME!

Rhymes and songs help children develop phonological awareness, an ear for language. Some researchers believe children who know at least six rhymes by the time they are six are more likely to become better readers.

Use these prompts to come up with the remaining rhyme. Check your local library for those you don't know or have forgotten. Leave out the last rhyming word in the phrase and see if your child can fill in the missing words.



Jack and Jill

Humpty Dumpty

Pat-A-Cake

This Little Piggy

Jack Be Nimble

Shoe the Little Horse

Hot Cross Buns

Jack Sprat

Eensy Weensy Spider

Old King Cole

Hey Diddle Diddle

Three Little Kittens

Simple Simon

Ring Around the Rosie

Baa, Baa, Black Sheep

Hickory Dickory Dock

I See the Moon

Bye Baby Bunting

Diddle, Diddle, Dumpling

Round and Round the

Garden

Teddy Bear, Teddy Bear

Georgie Porgie

Little Miss Muffett

One, Two, Buckle My Shoe

Little Bo Peep

Little Boy Blue

To Market, To Market

Wee Willie Winkie

Mary, Mary Quite Contrary

Rub-A-Dub-Dub

There Was an Old Woman

Peter Piper

Peter, Peter, Pumpkin Eater

Ten Little Monkeys

Star Light, Star Bright

MORE FUN WITH RHYMES

Rhyming Hunt

Say “We’re going on a rhyming hunt. Let’s find some things that rhyme with clock.”

Try it with words like: floor, blue, shoe, coat, wall, book, door, red, hog, mouse.

Line Rhyme

Say an easy rhyming word like cat. Go around the car and have each person take turns saying another rhyming word until there are no more letter/sound combinations. For children who get stuck, help supply the beginning sound. “Let’s try putting the “m” sound in front. What would it be? Mat. That’s right. Mat.”



Change that Song

Sing it to “Skip to my Lou”

Rhyme, rhyme, these words rhyme

Rhyme, rhyme, these words rhyme

Rhyme, rhyme, these words rhyme

So rhyme along with me!

(You can also substitute the “Sing, ring” for “Rhyme, rhyme.”) Try this with other words like: cat, hat; dog, hog; tug, rug; big, wig; hit, sit; pen, hen.

I Spy

Use this phrase to help children identify things to look for:

I spy with my little eye something that rhymes with _____.

Other variations could include:

Something that starts with (identify letter sound)

Something that starts with color (identify color)

Something that starts with the letter (D)

Something that starts with this sound (fff)

FUN SONGS FOR THE CAR OR ANYWHERE

The best way to share songs with young children is to relax and enjoy singing with them. Singing songs together can help children expand their vocabulary and improve their attention span, concentration, phonemic awareness, and memory. So pick a tune and start singing! Stop by your local library for all kinds of great music CDs and more. Make up new words to songs. “The Wheels on the Bus Go Round and Round,” could name animals instead of parts of a bus. Examples could be, “The dogs on the bus go bow-wow-wow” or “the chickens on the bus go cluck-cluck-cluck.”

WRITE DOWN ANY MORE FAMILY FAVORITES:

I'm a Little Teapot
Hokey Pokey
Yankee Doodle
You are my Sunshine
Knick, Knack, Paddy Whack
Old MacDonald
Down by the Station
Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star
Baby Beluga
It's Raining, It's Pouring
Hush Little Baby
Doe, a Deer
Mary Had a Little Lamb
Little Bunny Foo Foo
BINGO
Five Little Speckled Frogs
Shake Your Sillies Out
Farmer in the Dell
Row, Row, Row Your Boat
Three Blind Mice
Pop Goes the Weasel
Baby Bumblebee

London Bridge
Are You Sleeping?
If You're Happy and You Know It
Ten in the Bed
Fishing in the Dark
Take Me Out to the Ballgame
Rain, Rain, Go Away
The Ants Go Marching
It Ain't Gonna Rain
Gilligan's Island Theme Song
The Bear Went Over the
Mountain
It's a Small World
Green Grass Grew All Around
The Wheels on the Bus
This Land is your Land
Michael Finnegan
Lady Who Swallowed a Fly
Head and Shoulders
Do Your Ears Hang Low
De Colorés
Five Little Ducks

NARRATIVE SKILLS

These activities help build narrative skills, the ability to describe things and events as well as tell stories. Being able to tell or retell a story helps children understand what they read.

Tell a Tale

If you remember the plot line, you can tell your child these stories without reading a book. Or have your child tell you the story. Here are a few to get you going:

The Three Little Pigs

Little Red Riding Hood

Three Billy Goats Gruff

The Gingerbread Man

The Boy Who Cried Wolf

Rumplestiltskin

Cinderella

Goldilocks

Snow White

Chicken Little

Or add a twist to these stories. For example, Goldilocks and the Three Bears could become Goldilocks and the Three Hares, or Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs could become Snow White and the Three Little Pigs.

Family Stories

Recalling childhood memories and recent experiences are excellent ways to involve children in family storytelling.

Here are a few prompts:

The day your child was born or adopted

How the child's name was chosen

What your first school was like

Where you lived as a child

The pet(s) you had as a child

Your most memorable vacation

Your favorite family story

What your Grandparents were like

Your first job

One of the family holidays you celebrated

Your best friend as a child

What kind of chores you did

Stories your grandparents or elders shared with you

Make Up Your Own Stories

Here are a few prompts:

"Once upon a time there was a girl/boy named _____.

S/He liked to _____.

Pick your favorite toy. If it could come to life, would it be a boy or girl? What would it act like? What of your other toys would it be friends with?

Tell a story about living in a far off land or planet.

Story Bags

Put several items in a bag. Each person takes a turn pulling out one object and going on with the story using the "prop." Begin with "once upon a time..."

Story Starter

One person makes up a sentence that could begin a story. The next person continues the story by adding a sentence of their own. Keep taking turns until you've completed your story. If you want, write it down to read it later.

Fortunately-Unfortunately

This game helps teach kids to look at the bright side of things in a silly way. For example, you say, "Unfortunately, there is a tiger in the car." Your son says, "Fortunately, he doesn't eat boys." Your daughter says, "Unfortunately, he is looking at me and licking his lips." You say, "Fortunately I brought along my tiger-jaw-clamper." And so on, alternating between fortunate and unfortunate things.

- from www.momsminivan.com

Fantastic Pets

Fantastic pets make for some fantastic stories. To play, make up a story about a weird or unusual animal who comes to live with you.

What if a bear came to live with you? An eagle? A deer? What would happen? Would you give it a name? Where would it sleep? What would it eat for breakfast?



PLAYING WITH PRINT

These activities help build print awareness which includes knowing how to handle a book and knowing how to follow words on a page. This teaches children that print has meaning and gets them comfortable with printed language.

Word Hunt

Have your child think of words that can be found in the grocery store like giant, chocolate, bargain, cereal, orange, free. Choose two words and write them on a sheet of paper designed as a score sheet. As you and your child walk down the aisles, hunt for the two words and see which one you can find the most times. Pick out some new words next time. Or play the word hunt game while running errands or in your neighborhood. Try words like flowers, red, gas, bank, pizza, and library. Have fun!

-Adapted from Games for Reading: Playful Ways to Help Your Child Ready by Peggy Kaye

Making a List and Checking It Twice

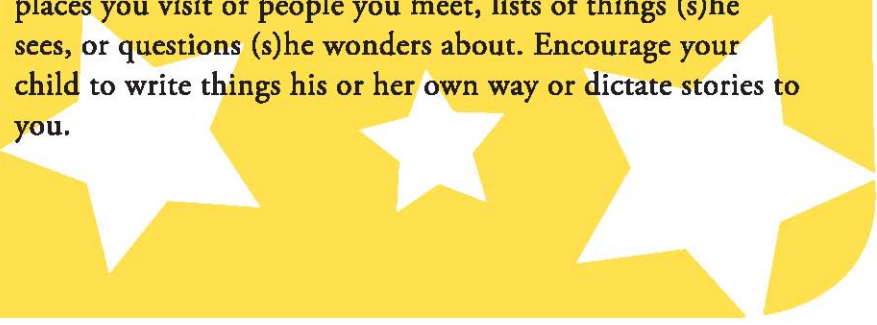
Before you leave your home, help your child make a list of things you need to get at the store. As you get them, have your child cross off the list.

Maps & Menus

If possible, print out a map of your destination and show your child how you read the map to find out how to get where you are going. Use the same technique for menus, signs, and even bumper stickers. They all show how we read different things to get information.

TRIP TIP

Get postcards at your stops to document the trip and write to friends while you are gone. Bring stamps so you can drop postcards in the mail on the road so they arrive at their destination before you return home. You may also consider picking up newspapers or other free travel guides. You can cut and paste these into a notebook. Keep a writer's notebook in your car or backpack. Your child might write down interesting things he or she sees along the road; memories of places you visit or people you meet, lists of things (s)he sees, or questions (s)he wonders about. Encourage your child to write things his or her own way or dictate stories to you.



VOCABULARY BUILDERS

Vocabulary is knowing the names of things. The more words children hear and understand, the more ready they will be on their own.

Play the First Word

Start the game off by saying the word. It can be any word that comes to the top of your head. Your child will then immediately say the first word that comes to mind. Then you will say another word and so on. For example, if you say “Cat” and your child may say “Mouse,” then you might say “Cheese” and your child may say “Sandwich.” It is interesting to see how your child’s thought process works.

Talk it Up!

While you are in the car together, tell your child the names of the parts of the car. If you are on a bus, use the names of the parts of the bus. Don’t be afraid to use the “big words” for things. “This is the gas pedal, or accelerator. Some people call it that because it makes the car accelerate, which means go faster.” If possible, have your child help you fill the car with gas or wash the windows. Show them how to tell how much the gas will cost.

Travel Scavenger Hunt

Watch for these items on your next trip. Make up your own lists and adjust them for the scenery. Be sure to include an unusual word or two that you can talk about together (i.e. we included cotton on this list. If it's summer and you are traveling through South Carolina, you might spot cotton in the field. You can talk about what farmers do when they harvest it. What other crops do you see?)

Red light

Bus

Stop sign

Dog

Grocery store

Train

Library

Bike

Church

Peach Trees

Cotton

Playground

Post office

Cow

Tomato plants

Post office

Cow

Barn

Dog in a car

Bridge

Hat

Police car

Truck

Chicken

Tractor

Pond

Gas station

Rest stop

Cat

White car

Truck

Garden

PRINT MOTIVATION

Print motivation is a child's interest in and enjoyment of books. Children who enjoy books will want to learn to read.

Head to the Library!

Your local public library is a great place to visit. Not only do most libraries now offer a wide variety of children's books and magazines that will interest your child, but there is a specially trained children's librarian to help you. Most libraries lend music CDs, audiobooks, and videos (DVD or VHS) of children's books and movies. They often host special programs like storytimes, summer reading programs, and homework help.

TRIP TIP

Always have at least one or two books with you in the car. Try joke or riddle books, books about your travel destination, your town, or good read-alouds. Comic books, nonfiction, and magazines are also fun for kids to read.



Read Alouds for the Whole Family:

(These titles vary as to age and reading level.)

Poppi by Avi

The Secret Garden by Frances
Hodgson Burnett

The Incredible Journey by Sheila
Burnford

Ramona or Henry books by Beverly
Cleary

Frindle by Andrew Clements

Charlie and the Chocolate Factory by
Road Dahl

The Tale of Despereaux by Kate
DiCamillo

Hoot by Carl Hiaasen

Judy Moody by Megan MacDonald

Winnie-the-Pooh by A.A. Milne

Hatchet by Gary Paulsen

A Long Way from Chicago by
Richard Peck

Charlotte's Web by E.B. White

Holes by Louis Sachar

Little House [series] by Laura Ingalls
Wilder

The Frogs Wore Red Suspenders by
Jack Prelutsky

A Bear Called Paddington by
Michael Bond

Hank the Cowdog books by Jon
Erickson

Flat Stanley by Jeff Brown

The Magic Treehouse [series] by
Mary Pope Osborne

The Cricket in Times Square by
George Selden

The Graveyard Book by Neil Gaiman

Amber Brown books by Paula
Danziger

Henry and Mudge books by Cynthia
Rylant

Bunnicula by James Howe

BINGO!

How many of these items can you spot?



Bus



Fire truck



Motorcycle



Airplane



Car



RV



Barn



Semi



Tractor



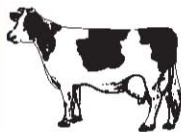
Pickup truck



Police car



Dog



Cow



Tow truck



Dump truck



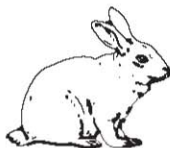
Minivan



Sports car



Bicycle



Rabbit



Tanker truck



VW Beetle

OTHER GAMES FOR THE CAR



Rhyming Riddles

Say, "I am thinking of something that you use to eat cereal.
It rhymes with moon." (spoon)

Where you sleep that rhymes with red (bed)

Put on over your sock that rhymes with blue (shoe)

It's a pet and rhymes with bog (dog)

It can fly and sounds like rain (plane)

It has four legs and rhymes with fat (cat)

20 Questions

For kids who have outgrown I Spy, try coming up with an item (animal, vegetable or place) and take turns asking questions to narrow it down. The goal is to guess the item in under 20 questions. Modify 20 questions for younger kids by starting with "I'm thinking of an animal (with a long neck)"...



Draw a picture of your family or something you see out your car window.

"Libraries connect children to a world far bigger than their own."

-Virginia Matthews, author of A Library Head Start to Literacy

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