

Especially for parents of infants! 

Homespun Fun

 *Literacy Learning Experiences*

Everyday family life is filled with moments that will spark your baby's interest in talking, reading, and writing. Make your home a place where he can learn the joys of books, stories, and talking!

What is the practice?

Looking at books. Scribbling and drawing. Fingerplays. Sound and word games. These kinds of things help babies learn to read, write, and talk. We call these different kinds of activities *literacy-rich home experiences*.

What does the practice look like?

An infant snuggles in an adult's lap as they look at a picture book. An infant and parent laugh as they play peek-a-boo. An infant in a highchair at the dinner table listens to her older brothers chat about their day at school. An infant uses his finger to draw in a puddle of pudding or yogurt. These are just a few of the literacy-rich experiences that babies like and enjoy.



How do you do the practice?

Babies benefit from experiences that create interest in reading, talking, and writing. These should be activities that your child finds fun and interesting. But don't overdo it! A few highly interesting activities are better than too many not-so-interesting things to do.

- Picture books. ABC books. Talking books. Photo-album books. These are all great bets for building a baby's interest in stories.
- Read to your baby any time she seems interested. Find favorite books and let her touch, point, show, and babble as you share them together.
- Play lap games and fingerplays together. Sing nursery rhymes and made-up songs with your child.
- Talk to your child while you are changing his diaper or cooking meals. Include your child when talking with others. Ask simple questions like "What do you think about that?" It isn't important for your child to understand what is being said. The important thing is making your child part of the activity.
- Let your child try finger drawing with pudding or yogurt. Involve your child in activities like watching you make a shopping list or write a note or letter.
- Encourage your child to play with alphabet toys that make sounds when shaken or dropped.

How do you know the practice worked?

- Does your child try to talk to you with sounds or hand motions?
- Does your child know the words that "come next" in a story or nursery rhyme?
- Does your child show interest in trying to draw with his or her fingers?

Take a look at more homespun fun activities

Reading Every Day

Susan became interested in books soon after she was able to hold things on her own. Having her mom or dad read stories to her is something she really enjoys. Susan's parents encourage her interest in books and reading. She gets to play with reading material every day. Board books, cloth books, homemade picture-album books, magazines, and talking books. These are some things they give Susan. Mom and Dad watch for chances to use Susan's interests when they read to her or tell her stories. She has become happily involved in these activities.

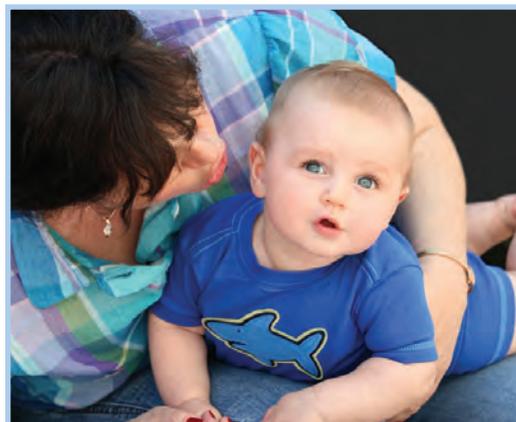


It's the Right Time To Write!

Landon, age 14 months, is very interested in watching his mother draw and write. Mom tries to find all kinds of ways for Landon to join in these activities. She encourages him to try to "write" on his own. He may only be able to scribble, but he loves "writing with Mom." She lets him use crayons and markers while she is writing a note or making a shopping list. She lets him draw with finger paints in the bathtub before having a bath. He gets to scribble with big pieces of chalk on the sidewalk outside their house. He even "types" on Mom's computer. As Landon does any of these things, Mom talks about what he is doing. She asks questions that help keep him involved in all kinds of pre-writing activities.

Tried-and-Tested Fun

David cannot see. Sarah cannot hear. Still they enjoy traditional lap games, nursery rhymes, and fingerplays. These activities let babies listen to sounds and words and interact with their parents. They can help infants express wants and needs using gestures or sign language. Both David's and Sarah's parents involve their children in lots of these kinds of play. As they play together, the parents talk about everything that is going on. They use simple words, signs, and sentences that David and Sarah have learned and understand.



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World of Words

 *Literacy Learning Experiences*

Most any place in a young child's neighborhood and community is alive with words. The world all around us is rich in sights and sounds. They will capture a baby's interest in listening and talking. When you involve your child in activities outside your home, you show him a world of words. Getting to read, talk, write, and more are what we call literacy-rich activities.

What is the practice?

Literacy learning activities are everywhere you look in your neighborhood and community. Hearing someone tell a story. Pointing out signs. Playing word games. These are just a few of the fun things you and your baby can do when out and about. Taking part in these things helps your child learn all kinds of early writing and reading skills.

What does the practice look like?

A mother and daughter attend a mother-and-infant play group a couple of times a week. Each session is filled with songs, games, and stories. Their favorite thing is a simple version of *Head, Shoulders, Knees, and Toes*. The little girl really likes this rhyming song. She enjoys wiggling her toes in the air while her mother and the other mothers sing the song. She even lies down on the floor and kicks her feet. This lets her mother know she is ready to play!



How do you do the practice?

Here are some ways to involve your child in literacy-rich neighborhood and community activities.

- What things does your child like and enjoy doing? If an activity interests him, chances are he will learn from being involved in it.
- Look for places to go or things to do that match your child's interests. This will provide him lots of learning experiences.
- What kinds of things might be of interest? Library story times. Listening to a story at mother's morning-out programs. Saying nursery rhymes at parent-and-child play groups. Drawing and finger painting at an art workshop for wee ones. Don't overlook activities at book stores, recreation centers, and other places.
- What are some other activities? Listening to songs at a music store. Looking at a menu at a cafe. Going to a children's section of a book store. Talking to your child as he pets animals at a petting zoo. Almost any activity is an opportunity for talking, listening, and learning.

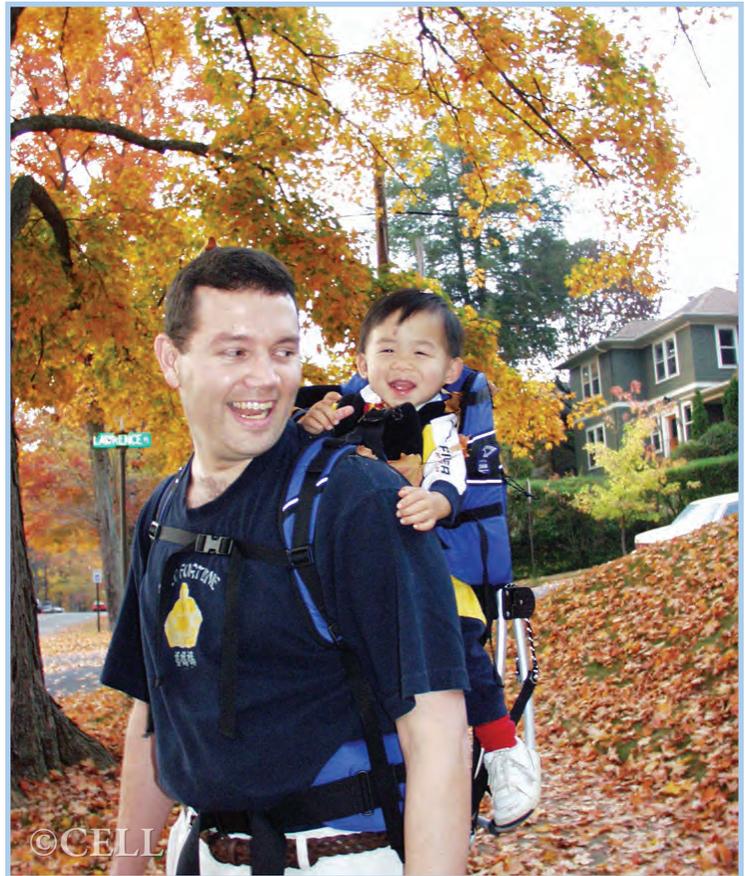
How do you know the practice worked?

- Does your child get excited when doing an activity?
- Does he try to do part of the activities?
- Does your child vocalize to get someone to continue to play?

Take a look at more fun in a world of words

Wonderful Walks

Paige is 14 months old. She and her father enjoy taking walks. Dad carries Paige in a baby backpack so she can see what is going on. On their walks, Paige's father points out both familiar and new things. He points to a neighbor's dog and says, "There's Skippy! Do you want to pet him?" He stoops down so Paige can pet the dog. Dad describes what she is doing. He encourages her to use gestures or sounds to "tell him" what she wants to do next. Paige sees someone she knows and starts to get excited. She makes sounds as the person gets near. These encounters provide Paige opportunities to listen and interact with her neighbor and father. These walks are filled with lots of talking, listening, and interacting. Paige loves all the attention!



Words Everywhere!

Wyatt is 5 months old. His favorite things to do are going to a baby exercise class and at the local recreation center. They are fun things because there is so much to see, do, and hear. He is "all eyes and ears." The baby exercise class includes lots of rhymes, finger plays, and singing that Wyatt so much enjoys. The swimming class includes music and "dancing" while in the water! Wyatt's mother describes and explains what they are doing in each of the activities. She gets Wyatt to babble and gesture to tell his mom "what he thinks" about everything. These parent-and-child play times are chances for mom and son to talk to each other while having fun.

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Places To Go and People To See

Literacy Learning Experiences

Babies' homes are rich in moments that set the stage for later reading and writing. Things that happen outside the home also help infants learn early language and literacy skills.

What is the practice?

Routine family and community outings provide a child lots of early learning opportunities. They introduce infants to people and places that are sources of rich learning experiences. This practice guide includes activities for learning communication, language, and the beginnings of reading and writing.

What does the practice look like?

Things that happen day in and day out provide a child chances to hear sounds and words. See pictures and symbols. And introduce a child to reading and writing. These things happen all the time. This can be something as simple as seeing labels on boxes or cans at a store. It also can be something like infant story times at a public library.



How do you do the practice?

The ideas in this practice guide are things your child might already do. Getting your child more involved in these and other activities is what the practice is about.

- Start by thinking about things your child will most likely enjoy. The more interesting an activity, the more likely your child will try to communicate and talk.
- Take part in your child's play. What is your child most likely to do? Look for your child to make sounds, point, reach, get excited, and more.
- Talk about what your child is doing. Describe what your child is looking at, touching, and playing with. Use short sentences and questions. "You see the kitty, don't you?"
- Respond to your child's use of gestures or sounds. Repeat what your child does or says. This tells your child that he got you to play.
- Urge your child to show you what he is doing or looking at. Tune in to what your child is doing. The more you do this, the better the chance that he will want to "tell you" what he is doing.

How do you know the practice worked?

- Does your child use gestures or sounds to get you to play?
- Does your child get excited when you use words to describe what he is doing?
- Does your child show more interest in starting or playing an activity?

More learning during baby's everyday routines

Rhymes & Songs

Tim is 4 months old. He likes to play games that involve rhymes and singing. He gets all worked up playing **Peek-a-Boo**, hearing **Baby's Eyes**, and hearing his parents say **Rock-a-Bye Baby**. Tim's mother and father try to include these kinds of rhymes in their son's everyday routines. Dad plays **Peek-a-Boo** while changing Tim's diaper. He plays **I'm Gonna Get You** while feeding Tim. Mom plays **This Little Piggy** while putting on and taking off Tim's clothes. She recites **These Are Tim's Fingers** while they play on the floor. Tim's day is full of these fun-filled language and early literacy activities.



On the Town

Bryan and his mother spend lots of time seeing friends, running errands, shopping for food, and going to community events. One of 9-month-old Bryan's most liked things is having mom or dad read him stories. Bryan's mother uses his love of reading as part of what they do when out and about. Mom has a list of places they go to provide Bryan reading and storytelling experiences. Her list includes their local library, a bookstore, recreation center, grocery store, a neighbor's house, and a local theatre. Bryan so much looks forward to what he will get to do next!



Everyday Literacy Activities

Scribbling with crayons or magic markers
Playing with alphabet blocks or letter magnets
Listening to music
Playing *Peek-a-Boo* or *So-Big*
Playing finger games and clapping games
Playing rhyming games

Playing with puppets and stuffed toys
Going to the library
Talking on the phone
Having pretend phone calls
Going food shopping
Taking car or bus rides



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Out and About

 *Literacy Learning Experiences*

Parents often take their babies along to activities outside the home. Food shopping. Visiting relatives. Attending an older sibling's ball games. Eating out. Going to the library or book store. These kinds of activities provide opportunities for infants to become familiar with words and letters.

What is the practice?

Find new ways to expose your infant to symbols, signs, letters, words, books, and other familiar things. Seeing different things when you're out and about will help your child learn to recognize familiar things.

What does the practice look like?

A young mother takes her 10-month-old daughter to her older sister's Saturday-morning soccer game. They first pass a familiar shopping center, a billboard with a picture of a dog, and a fast-food restaurant. Finally they see the sign with the name of the soccer field. Along the way, the mother points out each landmark to the baby. "Look! 'Green Town Grocery.' That's where we go food shopping." "See the big doggy? Our dog Jumper is just like that." Labeling and pointing out familiar symbols and signs helps infants learn the connection between words and things that they see.



How do you do the practice?

There are many sights and sounds young children experience in their neighborhood and community. These are opportunities to help infants start matching signs and symbols with words. Here are some activities you might try when away from home with your child:

- Think of three or four things that your child sees often. They can be anything that is easy to recognize and especially interesting to a child. These are often places like a playground, supermarket, a relative's home, a fast-food restaurant. Point out the most obvious features of the familiar object or place. Describe what you see to your child ("There's Grandma's big blue house! Let's go see Grandma!").
- Anytime you and your child are in a familiar place, pick three or four things that your child especially likes. At a supermarket this might be cereal boxes, fruits and vegetables, milk, and eggs. Let your child reach for and hold the familiar objects or foods. Describe and name the items for your child.
- Find two or three community or neighborhood places that your child especially enjoys. This can be anyplace like a duck pond, public library, book store, or playground. Find activities you can do in each of these places to engage your child in interactions with you.

How do you know the practice worked?

- Does your child recognize signs or symbols more often?
- Does your child vocalize or get excited when she sees familiar people, places, and things?
- Does your child pay attention to the words you use to describe people, events, and so forth?

Take a look at more out-and-about activities

A View from the Bus

Ten-month-old Paco and his mother take the bus to go food shopping, run errands, and get some lunch. On the way, they pass many familiar sights. These include his sister's school, the family's church, a playground, billboards, and much more. Paco's mother holds him on her lap so that he can see everything as they go by. As they get close to each sight, Mom describes what Paco is about to see and asks him questions. "Do you see _____?" and "Where is the _____?" These question-and-answer chats have become a kind of game something like *I Spy*. Paco really looks forward to bus rides and playing the game with his mother.



Stroll and Chat

Alex's father and mother push their 5-month-old son down the street in a stroller on their way to the supermarket. Along the way, there are many things to look at and talk about. They point out interesting trees, flowers, animals, people, cars, and so much more. Mom and Dad name and talk about the things they see between home and the store. Whenever Alex sees something that catches his attention, he reaches out, gestures toward it, and babbles. His parents stop and talk about what got Alex excited. He listens closely to what Dad and Mom are saying to him. The more trips they make to the store, the more Alex notices the things that are interesting to him.

Shop and Learn

Food shopping is one of 16-month-old Luke's favorite things to do with his mother. He cannot sit independently in the shopping cart seat yet. Mom uses her coat to prop him up so he can see what is going on. She knows that Luke has learned to recognize what they will be seeing and putting in the cart. Mom talks to Luke throughout their time in the store. "Next we are going to get Luke's favorite food!" She holds up two kinds of fruit. "Do you want peaches or bananas?" Mom sometimes asks her son to point to things he recognizes. By the time they are finished shopping, Luke has probably heard the names of more than 50 different things!

