

Especially for practitioners working with infants!

ABC Books for Beginners

Print Awareness and Reading

Learning the alphabet starts long before a child is able to say the ABCs. ABC books are one way of turning story time into fun times filled with sounds, words, and letters.

What is the practice?

This practice uses store-bought or homemade ABC books to familiarize infants with the alphabet. It involves them in learning to enjoy books and storytelling. You can use these techniques or introduce them to parents in order to maximize young children's ABC-book-sharing experiences.

What does the practice look like?

You can use ABC books to show a child pictures of familiar or interesting objects and the first letters of words as you read or tell the child a story. You can recite an ABC rhyme, or use a book as part of a "made-up" story. ABC books will introduce the child to letters as part of having a story read or told to him. The more the child hears the sounds of words and letters of the alphabet, the more he will learn to notice the differences in sounds.

How do you do the practice?

There is not a right or wrong way to use ABC books with a child. The idea is to use the books to tell a story through illustrations of familiar things that include letters of the alphabet.

- Find or make ABC books that include things that are familiar and interesting to the child. Start with things he likes and enjoys.
- Read to the child when he is alert and interested in sitting on your lap or next to you.
- Show the book to the child and read or talk about what is on each page. Read in an enthusiastic and entertaining manner.
- Introduce descriptions of the ABCs into the storytelling. There is no need to try to go through the entire book at one time. Start with a few pages and add one or two pages each time you and the child read the book.
- Encourage the child to be part of the storytelling by having him touch, hold, bang, and yes, taste the book!



How do you know the practice worked?

- Does the child point to or touch pictures that are familiar to him?
- Does the child make sounds or try to repeat things you do or say?
- Does the child hand you books to read to him?

Take a look at more first ABC books

A Book of My Own

Nicholas' mother knows how important it is to read to her son from an early age. Her home visitor suggested making a book just for him. Together at each visit they have been taking and collecting pictures of Nicholas' favorite toys, people, animals, and other things. His mom chooses five of the pictures for Nicholas' first ABC book. She writes the first letter of each person or object on the picture. Next mom puts them in a small photo album to make his book. She introduces the book to her son by saying

"Mommy has a special treat for Nicholas. His very own ABC book." They find a comfortable place with Nicholas sitting between her legs while she holds the book in front of him. Mom reads the book's title while pointing to it: "Nicholas' ABC Book." "Let's read your book!" Mom says to Nicholas. She opens to the first page, which has a picture of Nicholas' big sister. He reaches for and pats the picture, while Mom says, "You see Abby! Abby starts with an A." They continue looking at the ABC book, pointing, talking, and getting excited.



What's Next?

Jada's mother is sitting in a chair with 8-month-old Jada seated in her lap. They begin to read what has become a favorite book. The story is about ABCs racing up a coconut tree while playing a game of tag. "A tells B..." Mom reads, and asks Jada, "What's next?" Mom recites the book's rhyming chant, pausing between verses to ask her daughter to "guess what happens next." This excites Jada, especially when she hears the names of the letters she remembers. The story ends with Jada babbling along as her mom reads, "Chicka, chicka, boom, boom, they all fall down!"

Animal ABC Fun

Samantha is 14 months old. She has both a physical disability and some visual difficulties. Samantha enjoys hearing her teacher, Adele, sing ABC songs. Adele knows that some of Samantha's favorite things are animals. She especially likes bears, dogs, and other animals that make "scary sounds." As part of singing ABC songs to the children in her classroom, Adele uses a large-print book about animals. Each picture has the first letter of each animal's name. Adele does not expect the children to learn the letters. She just wants them to have lots of fun with the names and first letters of the animal names. Samantha gets excited and makes lots of sounds whenever her teacher shows her the pictures of her favorites.

