

Especially for practitioners working with toddlers!

B Is for Book

Alphabet Awareness

Before children can learn to read words, they first have to recognize the letters of the alphabet. ABC books introduce toddlers to the letters of the alphabet and to the corresponding sounds of each letter.

What is the practice?

Reading ABC books with the toddlers in your class helps them learn that each letter has its own name and its own sound. Reading and sharing ABC books helps children become interested in the alphabet by teaching letter recognition and letter sounds. Children who can identify letters and distinguish letter sounds have a considerable advantage in learning to read.

What does the practice look like?

Paging through an alphabet book, a responsive adult points out letters and sounds based on what captures the child's interest. This helps toddlers start to identify letters and develop a connection between the shapes they see and the sounds they hear.

The adult can ask the toddler questions about what she sees on the page. She can help the child listen for the sounds in a group of words with the same initial consonants.

How do you do the practice?

There are many opportunities to read ABC books throughout the school day. Putting ABC books in easy-to-reach spots and in different centers allows toddlers easy access to the materials.

- ABC books come in a variety of styles. Choose books that are easy for the toddlers in your class to handle. Look for board books or oversized books with bright, colorful pictures.
- Share an ABC book at circle time and, while pointing to each letter, have the toddlers sound out each letter with you.
- Ask the children to think of what other words begin with the letter sound.
- Help children identify the letters that start their names and use those as a starting point for listening for similar sounds.



How do you know the practice worked?

- Are the toddlers in your class showing interest in books?
- Do they point to the pictures and letters in the book?
- Do the toddlers in your class show interest in ABC books?

Take a look at more fun with ABC books

A Favorite ABC Book

Home visitor Alma usually brings books for 22-month-old Tameeka to look at with her mom between visits. One that Tameeka looks forward to seeing is a book that has a big letter on one page. Something interesting that starts with that letter is on the facing page. As they go through the book looking at each letter/picture pair, Alma asks, "What's on this page, Tameeka?" "Fits," Tameeka says, as they look at the pages with the letter F and a bright blue fish. "That's right! It's a fish," Alma says. "Look at it splash! What sound does 'fish' start with?" Together they stretch out the word, and repeat the Fff sound. Tameeka's mom reads the next page, and they examine the shape of the letter G and listen for its sound. Sometimes Tameeka loses interest before they finish the book, but she is excited to keep it until Alma's next visit. She knows her mom will be happy to look at it with her whenever she wants.



"It's Your Letter!"

Krista, a teacher in a classroom of two-year-olds, finds a small group of children in the library corner. They are looking intently at a new brightly-colored book. "You found the new alphabet book," Krista says. "What do you think of it?" The children want Krista to read it to them. She opens the book and asks what is on the first page. They identify the pictures, all objects that begin with A. Krista shows them the A by tracing the letter with her finger and encouraging them to do the same. "Who has this letter in their name?" Krista asks. "Adrian, it's your letter, isn't it? Your name starts with A too!" All the other children want to find 'their' letters as they go through the pages.

Signs and Letter Sounds

Carolina, who is almost three, has some difficulties with understanding everything she hears. Her early interventionist Rhea uses alphabet books along with sign language. This helps Carolina make the connection between what she sees on the page and what sounds she hears. They start with the C page. "Cccc for Carolina," Rhea says while she signs, exaggerating the sounds. "Can you trace the C with your finger?" Carolina studies the picture as she moves her hand across the page. "And here's how we make C with our fingers," Rhea adds, showing her the sign. "What are some other words besides Carolina that have the Cccc sound?" They use the familiar pictures in the book to say and sign some other words that begin with C. Carolina even comes up with one of her own—the name of her big brother, Carlos, who is playing nearby.

