

Especially for practitioners working with toddlers! 

Letters and Books

Storytelling and Listening

Before children can learn to read words, they first have to recognize the letters of the alphabet. Alphabet books introduce toddlers to the letters of the alphabet and to the sounds each letter represents. Alphabet books help children become interested in the alphabet. They teach toddlers letter recognition, letter sounds, and words that begin with the same letter.

What is the practice?

Reading and sharing alphabet books helps children become interested in the alphabet by teaching letter recognition and letter sounds. Children who can identify letters and know different letter sounds have a large advantage in learning to read.

What does the practice look like?

When looking at alphabet books with the toddlers in your class, point to the letters as you read the book. "Sound out" the letters and encourage the toddlers in your class to do the same. Follow the children's interests. If your class likes sharks a lot, choose an ocean-themed alphabet book to spark their interest.



How do you do the practice?

There are many opportunities to read alphabet books throughout the school day.

- Put alphabet books in places that are easy to reach. Putting them in various activity centers allows toddlers easy access to the materials.
- Alphabet books come in many styles. Choose ones that are easy for the toddlers in your class to handle. Try board books or oversized books and look for ones that have bright, colorful pictures.
- Place a variety of alphabet toys around the room to reinforce toddlers' familiarity with letters. Some ideas include putting ABC stamps in the writing center and sponge letters in the water and/or art center. You could provide alphabet blocks in the block center and magnetic letters on the play appliances in the housekeeping center.
- When working with older "twos," ask the children to try forming the shapes of the letters with their bodies. They can do this on their own or as small groups. Children love to participate, and this is a great way to get them actively involved in the alphabet.
- Sing the Alphabet Song and other ABC songs with your class.

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 books?
- Do the students in your class often play with ABC toys?

Take a look at more fun with abc books and toys

Letters and Trains!

Nathan is 20 months old and loves when his home visitor brings fun books and toys with which to play. Nathan's favorite thing right now is trains. His home visitor shows him a new book about trains. Each page has a train and the first letter of that kind of train or train car on every page. The two join Nathan's mom on the couch. They take turns pointing out the trains, talking about where they have seen trains before, and saying some of the letters out loud. Nathan's mom reports to the home visitor that she and her son often look at books that same way. Nathan remembers more of the letters each time. This lets Nathan's home visitor know he is enjoying and learning from these kinds of activities.



ABC Book Activities

Cathy provides the toddlers in her class lots of opportunities to look at and talk about the alphabet. She adds new ABC books with different themes and appearances to the book corner regularly. The children enjoy selecting the books for shared reading. Cathy and her toddlers look at the colorful pictures and talk about what they see. Cathy emphasizes the initial sounds of the pictures' names. They trace each letter with their fingers and sometimes try to "draw" it in the air while they say it. They also talk about the beginning letters of their names. Cathy knows her toddlers enjoy these activities because they often bring the alphabet books to her to be read.

Touch-and-Feel ABCs

Lizbeth wants to make books accessible to all the toddlers in her inclusive class. In addition to regular books, she provides touch-and-feel books as well as oversized board books with tabbed pages. These adaptations make enjoying books easier for children with sensory impairments or trouble with fine motor skills like page turning. Lizbeth also has her class construct their own alphabet book. The children glue fabric and paper with different textures onto letters she draws on the pages. When the pages dry, they bind their book together. The children take turns touching, finger tracing, and talking about the letters they have made.

