

Especially for practitioners working with young children! 

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 by teaching 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 distinguish letter sounds have a considerable advantage in learning to read.

What does the practice look like?

When you look at an alphabet book 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 interest. If your class is interested in sharks, choose an underwater-themed alphabet book to spark their interest.

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How do you do the practice?

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

- Putting alphabet books in easy-to-reach spots and 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, such as 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: ABC stamps in the writing center; sponge letters in water and/or art center; 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 individually 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

Activities with ABC Books

Catherine provides the toddlers in her class lots of opportunities to look at and talk about alphabet. She adds new ABC books with different themes and appearances to the book corner regularly, and the children often select them for shared reading. Catherine and her toddlers look at the colorful pictures, talking about what they see. Catherine 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. Catherine knows her toddlers enjoy these activities because they often bring the alphabet books to her to be read.

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Letters and Trucks!

Twenty-month-old Nathaniel loves when his home visitor brings fun books and toys to play with. Nathaniel's favorite thing right now is trucks. His home visitor shows him a new book that has a truck and the first letter of that kind of truck on every page. They join Nathaniel's mom on the couch, taking turns pointing out the trucks, talking about where they've seen them before, and saying some of the letters out loud. Nathaniel's home visitor knows he is enjoying and learning from these kinds of activities, because his mom reports they frequently look at books the same way, and Nathaniel remembers more each time.

Touch-and-Feel ABCs

In order to make books accessible to all the toddlers in her inclusive class, Elizabeth includes touch-and-feel books as well as oversized board books with tabbed pages for children who have sensory impairments or trouble with fine motor skills like page turning. She also has her class construct their own alphabet book by gluing fabric and paper with different textures onto letters she draws. When everything dries, they bind their book together and take turns touching, finger tracing, and talking about the letters they've made.

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