

bornlearning<sup>SM</sup>

# recipes for learning

> fun activities  
to spark your child's  
language and learning

These fun and simple activities  
will help you play with your  
child in ways that develop his  
language skills.

a Civitas initiative

Made possible with the support of

 McCormick Tribune  
Foundation

*Born Learning*<sup>SM</sup> is a public engagement campaign helping parents, caregivers and communities create early learning opportunities for young children. Designed to support you in your critical role as a child's first teacher, *Born Learning* educational materials are made available through the efforts of United Way, United Way Success By 6 and Civitas.

For more information, visit us online at [www.bornlearning.org](http://www.bornlearning.org).



**Congratulations!** You now own a *Recipes for Learning* book, designed to help you have fun with your child and build his early language skills, too.

Your *Recipes for Learning* book is organized according to your child's age (infant, toddler or preschooler) and includes five categories.

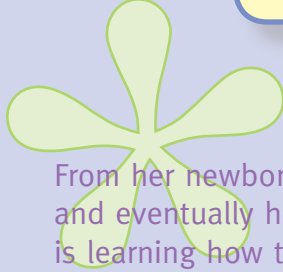
- **Reading:** Introduce the magic of books and a love of reading that will last a lifetime.
- **Talking and Listening:** Make everyday activities meaningful through conversation.
- **Songs and Rhymes:** Connect with your child through songs and rhymes.
- **Stories:** Entertain and educate your child with stories.
- **Writing and Drawing:** Encourage your child to experiment with writing.

**Have Fun!**





# infants



From her newborn cries, to her first smiles, and eventually her first words, your infant is learning how to communicate from the moment she is born.

Using words, sounds, books, stories, rhymes and music in your everyday activities, you can both create a strong connection with your infant and support her early language development.



**In this section, you'll find the following topics:**

Talking and Listening ...	
Ask and answer questions	p. 1
Introduce new words	2
Talk and listen and talk	3
Create and keep up conversation	4
Reading ...	
Reading opportunities are everywhere	5
Make reading playful	6
Ask and encourage questions	7
Get your child involved	8
Songs and Rhymes ...	
Sing and listen to music	9
Make and play instruments	10
Play games with words and sounds	11
Read and sing rhymes	12
Stories ...	
Tell family stories	13
Tell your child's story	14
Make stories active	15
Collect stories	16
Writing and Drawing ...	
Use creative tools ...	17
Talk about scribbling, drawing and writing	18
Get physical with scribbling, drawing and writing	19
Encourage scribbling, drawing and writing	20

# ask & answer questions

Ask your baby questions  
and someday you'll get  
an answer.

**HOW IT WORKS:** Having conversations with your baby helps him learn to talk. It also teaches him to listen to others and then respond.

**WHAT YOU NEED:** You, your baby and a lot of questions.

## Clever ways to encourage questions:

### Looking for a Coo

**HOW TO PLAY:** When you ask your baby a question, wait and look for his response, like his eyes opening wide or a coo.

**ASK HIM ANYTHING:** Ask, "Are you hungry?" He won't use words to answer you, but he may respond with a look or a gurgle.

### TIP

*Remember to wait after you ask a question to give your baby a chance to respond in his own way.*

### Me Too

**HOW TO PLAY:** Have a conversation with your baby. Ask her a question and pause for an answer from her. Then provide a response.

**THE SCRIPT:** "Would you like to go outside?" Pause. "You would? Me, too! Let's go outside."

### TIP

*Have pretend conversations with your baby throughout the day. Ask, "What should we have for breakfast?" Then reply, "Let's try rice cereal."*

# introduce new words

**Name names, faces, places and things.**

**HOW IT WORKS:** By putting words with objects, you help a baby start to figure out language. This is the first step to talking and then to reading.

**WHAT YOU NEED:** You, your baby and the objects around you.



## Wacky ways to teach new words:

### Tickle Talk

**HOW TO PLAY:** Ask your baby, “Where’s your tummy?” Then touch or tickle his tummy and say, “There’s your tummy!” Repeat a few times. Babies need to hear a word many times before they can really learn it.

**MIX IT UP:** After the tummy, move on to the nose, elbows and toes.



**TIP**

*Stop when your baby starts to lose interest.*

### My Very First Name Game

**HOW TO PLAY:** Point to and name objects over and over.

**ANY OBJECT WILL DO:** “Here’s your blanket. Your very favorite blanket. What a nice soft blanket.”




**TIP**

*Ham it up. Sing the words. Dance with the blanket. Have a good time.*

talk & listen &  
talk & listen

Your baby doesn't need to talk to have a conversation.



**HOW IT WORKS:** Talk with your baby about the things that happen during your day. Let her coo back. This teaches her how to take turns speaking and listening.



**WHAT YOU NEED:** Just you and your baby.

## Cool ways to chat with your child:

### Go Ga-Ga

**HOW TO DO IT:** Speak your baby's language. If he says "ga-ga," you say "ga-ga."

**ACT IT OUT:** Baby talk is better with smiles, laughs, funny faces or finger-pointing.

### TIP

*You can also use real words. When your baby makes a sound such as "ba-ba" and stretches for his bottle, you say, "Here's your bottle. Is your milk good?"*

### Play by Play

**HOW TO DO IT:** Talk to your baby as you go through the day together.

**DON'T HOLD BACK:** Talk about it all. "Bye-bye, stinky diaper. Let's throw it away."

### TIP

*Pause after you speak. Let your baby comment. This teaches her how conversations work.*

# create & keep up conversation

Infants need  
conversation, too.

**HOW IT WORKS:** Conversations don't need words. Listen and respond to all of the sounds your baby makes. Give him a chance to answer you.

**WHAT YOU NEED:** You, your baby, stuffed animals, dolls or other toys.

## Creative ways to chat:

### Talk to the Animals

**HOW TO PLAY:** Your baby can't talk. But you can pretend that his favorite stuffed animals can! Talk with them.

**PUT WORDS IN THEIR MOUTHS:** You say, "Sleepy Pony, how are you feeling today?" Sleepy Pony says, "Pretty good, but I'm hungry."

#### TIP

*Have a few toys talk to each other. Your baby will love to watch and laugh.*

### Babble It Back

**HOW TO PLAY:** Turn baby talk into conversation. Repeat the sounds your baby makes.

**ANY SOUND WILL DO:** If your baby says "ma," then you say "ma" back.

#### TIP

*Remember to use a high voice — babies love it.*



# reading opportunities are everywhere

Introduce books early  
and read often.

**HOW IT WORKS:** Before a child can read, she needs to be familiar with the written word. She needs to look at words, play with books and watch you read.

**WHAT YOU NEED:** Any written words will do — books, labels and signs are all things you can read to your infant.



## Ways to have fun with words:

### Words, Words, Where Are You?

**HOW TO PLAY:** Written words are everywhere you go. Find them and read them out loud to your child.

**GOOD PLACES TO LOOK:** When in the car or on a bus, read road signs and words on big trucks. When out for a walk, read street signs, words on the mailbox and signs in store windows.

#### TIP

*The grocery store is a great field trip with an infant — full of words to point out and talk about.*

### Reading Routines

**HOW TO PLAY:** Read with your child every day. Make it a fun and special time.

**SAME TIME, SAME PLACE:** Read the same story before naps or bedtime.

#### TIP

*Read as much as you can. You don't have to finish the story. When your baby loses interest, put the book down.*

make  
reading  
playful

A book can be a baby's favorite toy.

**HOW IT WORKS:** Babies love to look at and hold books. It seems like child's play, but it's the start of a life full of reading.

**WHAT YOU NEED:** Soft cloth or board books. Make sure they are chewable and safe for babies.

## Fabulous ways to make reading fun:

### Point It Out

**HOW TO PLAY:** Point out interesting pictures as you read. Describe them. Explain what they are.

**TAKE IT UP A LEVEL:** Play peek-a-boo with a picture. Cover and uncover it with your hand.

### TIP

*Let your child point. Place your baby's finger on the pictures you describe.*

### Something to Chew on

**HOW TO PLAY:** Give your baby cloth or board books that are soft and safe. Let him feel them with his hands and mouth.

**WE INTERRUPT THIS STORY:** Your baby might grab the book as you read to him. That's okay. Let him grab and play.

### TIP

*Look for books with pictures of babies. Babies like to look at other babies.*

# ask & encourage questions

Asking questions is a way to teach your baby.

**HOW IT WORKS:** When you point to pictures in books and ask questions about them, you teach new words. You also help your baby to communicate with you.

**WHAT YOU NEED:** Picture, board, cloth or textured books.

## Ideas for asking interesting questions:



### Do It Yourself Help

**HOW TO PLAY:** Read a bit. Ask a question about the story. Answer it yourself.

**PAUSE FOR BABY:** “What do you see on this page?” Pause. “Is it a duck?” Pause. “Yes, it’s a duck.”

#### TIP

*Repeat yourself. Each time you read a book, ask similar questions. The repetition helps your baby learn.*



### Give Me Pointers

**HOW TO PLAY:** Ask your baby to point to a certain animal or object on a page.

**TAKE IT UP A LEVEL:** For older babies, ask harder questions. “Show me the animal that goes ‘baa.’”

#### TIP

*Provide an answer. If your baby points to the wrong picture or nothing at all, praise her for trying but show her the right one.*

get  
your child  
involved

*Read with your baby,  
not to him.*

**HOW IT WORKS:** When you hold your baby and let him play with the pages while you read, he learns that reading can be fun.

**WHAT YOU NEED:** Simple books that won’t fall apart — and lots of love.

## Inviting ways to involve your child:

### Cuddle Up

**HOW TO PLAY:** Hold your child on your lap. Cuddle up when you read.

**SIDE ACTIVITIES:** Take your baby's hand and use it to point to objects in the book. Say "moo" as you point to a cow together.

### TIP

*Watch your baby. When she starts to look away, pull away or fuss, stop reading and do something else.*

### A Real Page Turner

**HOW TO PLAY:** Read a book with your baby. Let him turn the pages.

**OUT OF ORDER:** Your baby will want to pull on and turn more than one page. Let him. It is okay if you go out of order.

### TIP

*Read the page your baby has turned to and then go back to where you were.*

# sing & listen to music



Share the rhythms  
and sounds of music.



**HOW IT WORKS:** Let your baby listen to music throughout the day.

**WHAT YOU NEED:** Your voice and a radio or a CD.

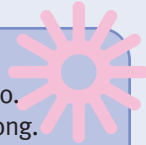


## Simple ways to share music:

### Turn On the Tunes

**WHAT TO PLAY:** Anything! Turn on the radio. Wind up a mobile. Don't forget to sing along.

**WHEN TO PLAY:** Anytime! While you're making dinner, giving a bath or putting your baby to sleep.



#### TIP

*Fit the music to the mood. Use soothing sounds before bed and silly ones to get a smile.*

### Bring Out the Oldies

**HOW TO PLAY:** Sing songs from your childhood. Sing songs from your culture.

**ANY SONG WILL DO:** What songs did your parents sing to you? What songs did you sing at school?



#### TIP

*Refresh your memory. Ask your parents, siblings or friends for suggestions.*

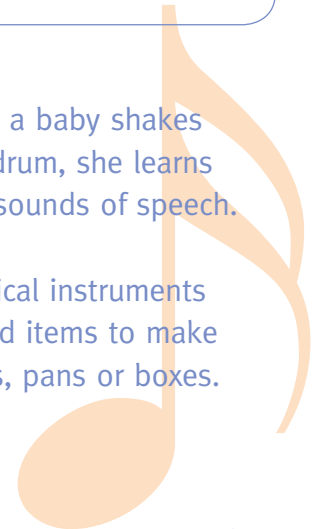
# make & play instruments

Music feeds the smallest bodies and souls.



**HOW IT WORKS:** When a baby shakes a rattle or pounds a drum, she learns about the beats and sounds of speech.

**WHAT YOU NEED:** Musical instruments or everyday household items to make them, such as spoons, pans or boxes.



## Cute ways to create music:

### Rock around the House

**HOW TO PLAY:** Make instruments and rhythms with objects in your house.

**ANY OBJECT WILL DO:** Fill a plastic bottle with cereal and shake it. Or beat a spoon against a pot or an empty box.

TIP

*Make a band! Play your instruments together.*

### Shake, Rattle and Roll

**HOW TO PLAY:** Give your baby different kinds of instruments to touch and feel.

**VARIETY IS THE SPICE OF LIFE:** Shake rattles and say “Rattle!” Pound drums and say “Bang!” Pluck a guitar and say “Pling!” Press keys on a toy piano or keyboard.

TIP

*Show your baby how it's done. He will enjoy the lesson and the show.*

© 2006 Civitas. All rights reserved.

# play games with words & sounds

There is meaning  
behind the babble.

**HOW IT WORKS:** Babble helps your baby work her way to her first conversation by trying out sounds.

**WHAT YOU NEED:** You and your baby. Soft books and stuffed animals are nice, too.

## Fun ways to play with words:

### Coo Too

**HOW TO PLAY:** Talk to your baby. Make playful sounds, imitate the sounds he makes or simply talk about the weather.

**IT TAKES TWO:** After you speak, pause. Wait for your baby to answer you with his own sounds or gestures.

#### TIP

*The pause is important. It gives your child a chance to copy your sounds. This is how babies learn to talk.*

### Show and Tell

**HOW TO PLAY:** Hold or point to an object. Say its name. Give your baby time to talk back to you.

**PULL OUT THE STOPS:** Use your baby's favorite things: stuffed animals, mobiles or objects on a blanket.

#### TIP

*Don't overdo it. If your baby turns her head away or cries, she's had enough for a while.*

# read & sing rhymes

Take some time to  
rhyme, rhyme, rhyme!

**HOW IT WORKS:** Rhymes help your baby tune in to the sounds and rhythms of language.

**WHAT YOU NEED:** Rhymes of all kinds. Rhymes you sing, rap, read or make up yourself.

## Great ways to make rhymes routine:

### Rhyme All the Time

**HOW TO PLAY:** Add songs or rhymes into everyday routines such as bath and bedtime.

**SING ABOUT IT:** How about a diaper change rhyme? “Here’s your nose ... these are your toes!”

#### TIP

*Have fun. Make up goofy rhymes. If they don’t rhyme perfectly, that’s fine, too.*

### Read the Classics

**HOW TO PLAY:** Find children’s books with simple rhymes.

**WHO TO READ:** Try Dr. Seuss and Mother Goose. Want more? Ask for poems and rhyming story ideas at your library, or bookstore or from your friends.

#### TIP

*Do it again! Little ones love to hear rhymes over and over again.*

# family tell stories

Welcome your baby into his family with stories.

**HOW IT WORKS:** Telling family stories to your baby teaches him about the people in his world. It also helps him learn to listen and understand words.

**WHAT YOU NEED:** Good stories and family pictures.



## Use family history to tell stories:

### Who Is It?

**HOW TO PLAY:** Show your baby pictures of family members. Point to and talk about the people in the pictures.

**KNOCK, KNOCK:** When family members visit, take pictures of them with your baby. Later, use the pictures to talk about the visit.

### TIP

*Put pictures of the family around the house — on the refrigerator, in your baby's room, anywhere your baby can see them is good.*

### Tell It Again and Again

**HOW TO PLAY:** Tell family stories again and again. Talk about where you grew up, your family pet or where you went on vacations.

**MAKE IT PART OF YOUR ROUTINE:** Before a nap or bedtime, tell your baby a story about your family.

### TIP

*Ask family members to share stories with you that you can tell to your child.*

# tell your child's story

Storytelling is a  
great way to teach.

**HOW IT WORKS:** Babies love to listen to stories about themselves. As they listen, they pick up the sounds of language and facts about their world.

**WHAT YOU NEED:** You and your baby.

## Simple ways to tell your child's story:

### Me Stories

**HOW TO PLAY:** Tell stories that use your baby's name or the names of others in his life.

**ONCE UPON A TIME:** "Once there was a boy named Joe. Joe had a mom, a dad and a sister named Rose."

### TIP

*As you are talking about family and friends, point them out. Say, "That is Aunt Lily. She is Mommy's sister."*

### All about Me

**HOW TO PLAY:** Tell your baby stories about things that have happened to her.

**"WHEN YOU WERE ...":** Talk about when your baby was born, came home from the hospital or took her first bath.

### TIP

*It's okay if you can't remember the exact details. Your baby will be happy just to hear your voice.*

make  
stories.  
active



Turn story time  
into playtime.

**HOW IT WORKS:** Story time is a chance for your baby to hear language. By making it fun, you help your baby listen and learn.

**WHAT YOU NEED:** Books, pictures, stuffed animals or toys.

## Perfect ways to use pictures and props:

### Shortest Stories

**HOW TO PLAY:** Tell short stories about your child's favorite toys, stuffed animals or pictures on the wall.

**PLAY IT UP:** Use the toys or stuffed animals to act out the story.

#### TIP

*Follow your baby's cues. If he seems fussy, move on to a new activity.*

### A Picture's Worth 1,000 Words

**HOW TO PLAY:** Tell stories about the pictures in your photo albums.

**MUCH TO TELL:** Tell your baby where the picture was taken. Tell the story of what the people in it were doing.

#### TIP

*Meet the family. Tell your baby the names of the people in the pictures.*

# collect stories

Good stories never grow old.

**HOW IT WORKS:** When a baby listens to stories, he learns to enjoy words and sounds.

**WHAT YOU NEED:** A pen, paper and a tape or video recorder.

## Creative ways to keep track of stories:

### The Way We Were

**HOW TO PLAY:** Keep a journal. Fill it with the little moments with your child that you want to remember.

**YOUR OWN MATERIAL:** As your child gets older, use the memories to tell her stories.

#### TIP

*Grab your journal or note pad at the same time each day. Write at least one thing your child did that day.*

### Hear Your History

**HOW TO PLAY:** Collect family memories. Talk to relatives. Write down or record their tales.

**AND THEN:** Share the stories with your child. "When your grandma was a little girl ..."

#### TIP

*Record when you can. It's nice to hear voices. They give a sense of who people are.*

# use creative tools for scribbling, drawing & writing

Let your baby grip,  
grab, touch and rub.

**HOW IT WORKS:** Good writing skills grow when a baby uses her hands and fingers to hold and play with objects and materials.

**WHAT YOU NEED:** Safe items for hand and finger play.

## Mix it up with materials:

### Make a Mess

**HOW TO PLAY:** Give your baby things that feel soft, scratchy, smooth or bumpy. Make sure they are safe for her to grasp, feel, smear or taste.

**TOOLS INCLUDE:** Food such as pudding or yogurt or fabric such as denim, terry cloth (like a washcloth), cotton or silk.

### TIP

*Let your baby smear food. Think of it as the early stages of writing and drawing.*

### Art It Up

**HOW TO PLAY:** Let your baby play with art supplies. Make sure they are safe for his age.

**TOOLS INCLUDE:** Large nontoxic, washable crayons, thick paintbrushes, water and paper.

### TIP

*Your baby will probably want to put these things in his mouth, so keep a close eye on him.*

# talk about scribbling, drawing & writing

It's never too early  
to introduce drawing  
and writing.

**HOW IT WORKS:** Your baby's curiosity and creativity will grow if you help her notice her world.

**WHAT YOU NEED:** You, your baby and an eye for details.

## Terrific ways to talk about writing:

### Talk While You Write

**HOW TO PLAY:** Let your baby see you writing and tell him what you are doing.

**MAKE A LIST:** Share your shopping list, to-do list or address list. Read aloud what you are putting on paper.

#### TIP

*Hold your baby on your lap so he feels more involved and can see you really writing.*

### Show and Tell

**HOW TO PLAY:** Show your baby how to have fun with nontoxic, washable crayons, markers, paintbrushes or other safe art supplies by guiding her hands and fingers.

**TALK AWAY:** As you guide her, talk about what you are doing together. Then give her a chance to create for herself, and describe her actions.

#### TIP

*Anything goes. The important thing is that you are having fun as you teach your child about creative ways to write and draw.*

# get physical with scribbling drawing & writing

Give your baby's hand muscles a workout.

**HOW IT WORKS:** Strong finger and hand muscles are the keys to holding food, toys, crayons and pencils. It's not too early to build muscles.

**WHAT YOU NEED:** Things to grasp and squeeze, like rattles and teethers, soft toys or stuffed animals.

## Playful ways to get physical:

### Fun with Drums

**HOW TO PLAY:** Give your baby metal, plastic or wooden spoons. Let him bang away.

**WHAT TO HIT:** His highchair tray, a plastic bowl or cup, a pot, pan or metal lid.

#### TIP

*Try giving him spoons of different sizes and shapes. Just be sure he doesn't hit himself.*

### Pick It Up

**HOW TO PLAY:** Let your baby practice picking up objects with her fingers.

**PICK UP THIS:** Have her move Cheerios® from one bowl to another. She'll also like objects such as wooden puzzles with pegs or kitchen spoons.

#### TIP

*Watch the size. Small objects, like buttons, that might be good for picking up are also choking hazards for a baby. Avoid them.*

# encourage scribbling drawing & writing

**Holding objects helps get your baby ready to write.**

**HOW IT WORKS:** When you let your baby play with different objects, you allow her to practice the skills she will use later to write and draw.

**WHAT YOU NEED:** Rattles, spoons and paper, to name just a few.

## Super ways to encourage a scribble:

### Shake It, Baby

**HOW TO PLAY:** Give your baby rattles, spoons and other toys to grasp and hold.

**SHOW HIM:** Teach your baby how to hold and shake a rattle. This is the first step to learning to hold crayons, markers and eventually pens and pencils.

#### TIP

*No rattles around? Give your baby your finger. Shake your hand when he grabs it.*

### Squeeze Play

**HOW TO PLAY:** Let your child hold and squeeze soft objects like balls, dolls or stuffed animals. The act of grasping is good practice for your child.

**BRING IT TO THE BATH:** Give your child a clean sponge or washcloth and let her squeeze away. This is good practice using her hands.

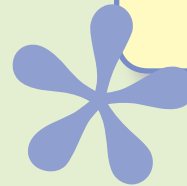
#### TIP

*Don't sweat the mess. Encourage your child to play. Clean up later.*

# toddlers

Your toddler is naturally curious about the world around him and eager to share his discoveries with you.

You can encourage this curiosity, as well as his ability to communicate, through your loving interactions and involvement in everyday activities.





**In this section, you'll find the following topics:**

Talking and Listening ...	
Ask and answer questions	p. 21
Introduce new words	22
Talk and listen and talk	23
Create and keep up conversation	24
Reading ...	
Reading opportunities are everywhere	25
Make reading playful	26
Ask and encourage questions	27
Get your child involved	28
Songs and Rhymes ...	
Sing and listen to music	29
Make and play instruments	30
Play games with words and sounds	31
Read and sing rhymes	32
Stories ...	
Tell family stories	33
Tell your child's story	34
Make stories active	35
Collect stories	36
Writing and Drawing ...	
Use creative tools ...	37
Talk about scribbling, drawing and writing	38
Get physical with scribbling, drawing and writing	39
Encourage scribbling, drawing and writing	40

# ask & answer questions

Toddlers like to talk about the things they like.

**HOW IT WORKS:** Ask your child about everyday activities and interests. She will enjoy talking about them. And you will enjoy learning about your child.

**WHAT YOU NEED:** You, your child and what she finds interesting.

## Clever ways to encourage questions:

### Speak to Me

**HOW TO PLAY:** Try to get your child to talk about his day by asking lots of questions.

**GOOD DINNER TALK:** Ask, "What was the best part of your day?" To help him remember, talk about all of the things he did that day.

### TIP

*Feelings are a good topic, too. Does your child have a big smile on his face? Ask, "You have a big smile on your face. Are you feeling happy?"*

### Interesting, Very Interesting

**HOW TO PLAY:** What interests your child today? Grab hold! Build conversation by asking questions about what she likes.

**KEEP AN OPEN EYE:** Is your child pointing to a cat? This is a great chance to ask, "What kind of animal is that? What is the cat doing?"

### TIP

*Don't just ask. Listen to your child's answers. Let her answers guide your talk.*

# introduce new words

You can teach new words to a toddler all the time.

**HOW IT WORKS:** If a child learns lots of words when he is young, he will become a better reader.

**WHAT YOU NEED:** You, your baby and the world around you.



## Wacky ways to teach new words:

### Neat New Words

**HOW TO PLAY:** Use new, interesting words. “It’s a *marvelous* day.” “The pancakes are *sizzling!*” Explain them to your child.

**PICTURE IT:** A great way to find new words is in your child’s books. Look at the pictures as well as the written words.



#### TIP

*Have your child say the new word. Ask her a question about it to make sure she understands.*

### Everyday Words

**HOW TO PLAY:** Find ways to use new words in your everyday activities. “It’s raining today. Let’s use an *umbrella*.”

**PLAY IT OUT:** Use the new word several times in your conversation to give it meaning. “An *umbrella* keeps us dry when it rains. I like this *umbrella* because it is red. What color *umbrella* would you like?”




#### TIP

*Remember, children need to hear a word many, many times to learn it.*




Use words to build your child’s world.



**HOW IT WORKS:** When you talk to your child about the things you do every day, your child listens. As he listens, he learns new words and ways to describe his world.

**WHAT YOU NEED:** Just you and your child.

## Cool ways to chat with your child:

### The Daily Play-by-Play

**HOW TO DO IT:** Describe what you are doing as you go through the day.

**NO ACTIVITY IS TOO DULL:** “Look, I’m washing the dishes. Wash, wash, wash!”

#### TIP

*Use silly voices. Talk with a booming voice or a whisper, or hold your nose as you talk. Have fun and your child will, too.*

### Child-Friendly Chit-Chat

**HOW TO DO IT:** Ask your child simple questions. Listen and respond to her answers.

**TOY TALK:** Ask about the activity or toy your child is interested in at the moment.

#### TIP

*Ask follow-up questions that show you are truly interested. “Yes, that’s a truck. It’s big, isn’t it? What color is it? Where is it going?”*

# create & keep up conversation

Support your  
child’s speech.

**HOW IT WORKS:** Toddlers understand many words, but they only speak a few. Help your child practice talking and grow his vocabulary by speaking with him all of the time.

**WHAT YOU NEED:** You and your child. Patience is helpful, too.

## Creative ways to chat:



### Stop, Look and Listen

**HOW TO PLAY:** Say something. Look at your child so she knows you are interested in her response. Listen to what she says.

**HOLD THAT THOUGHT:** Try to let her do most of the talking. This is hard to do, since toddlers know few words.

### TIP

*When you finish speaking, silently count to ten. No response from your child? Then you are free to talk again.*

### Turn-a-Phrase

**HOW TO PLAY:** Change your child's words into phrases or sentences.

**RUN WITH IT:** Your child says "doggie." You say (with excitement), "Yes, a dog. The dog is running in the yard."

### TIP

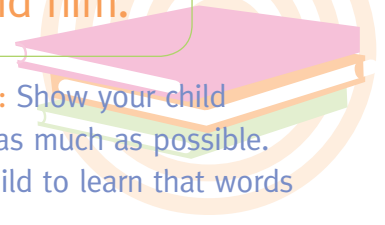
*Keep it up. Ask questions to continue the conversation. "What does a dog say?" "Do you like dogs?"*



**Make your child feel comfortable with the words around him.**

**HOW IT WORKS:** Show your child printed words as much as possible. This helps a child to learn that words have meaning.

**WHAT YOU NEED:** Words, anywhere and everywhere.



## Ways to have fun with words:

### The Writing on the Wall

**HOW TO PLAY:** Words are written all over the place. Take time to explain them to your child.

**RECOMMENDED READING:** Street signs, birthday cards, bus schedules, cereal boxes.

#### TIP

*Point it out. Follow the words with your finger. Have your child point, too.*

### Go with the Flow

**HOW TO PLAY:** What interests your child? Cars, animals or the stars? Go to the bookstore or the library to get a book on that topic.

**READ ALL ABOUT IT:** Read about things your child talks about. For example, if your child looks up and points at an airplane, read and talk about planes.

#### TIP

*Don't go alone. Make sure to take your child with you when going to the bookstore or library.*

make★  
reading  
playful★

Reading is not a sport to be watched from the sidelines.

**HOW IT WORKS:** Let your child help you tell a story. When she is involved, reading turns into fun. And if it's fun, she'll be more likely to want to do it.

**WHAT YOU NEED:** Books and a good imagination.

## Fabulous ways to make reading fun:

### Introduction to Acting

**HOW TO PLAY:** When you read, change your voice. Match it to fit different characters in the story.

**EVERYONE CAN PLAY:** Let your child pretend to be a part. Have her “roar” when she sees the lion.

#### TIP

*Help your child catch on. Use the same voices each time you read a specific part.*

### Act It Out

**HOW TO PLAY:** Act out scenes from a book for your child. Have him join in the fun.

**SCENE IDEA:** Say the book is about a little bird looking for its mom. You be the mom and hide. Let your child be the bird and find you.

#### TIP

*Use your hands. Move your body. Change the sound of your voice.*

# ask & encourage questions

Smart questions build strong language skills.

**HOW IT WORKS:** When you ask and answer questions as you read, you help your child to think and speak.

**WHAT YOU NEED:** Books, magazines, photos and newspapers.

## Ideas for asking interesting questions:

### Remember When?

**HOW TO PLAY:** Ask your child to remember things from the past. Use your child's books for ideas.

**ASK FOR MORE THAN YES OR NO:** Say you are reading about a snowman. Ask, "Remember when we built a snowman? What else do you like to do in the snow?"

#### TIP

*Don't just ask about the past. Children love to talk about the present and future, too.*

### What, When, How and Why

**HOW TO PLAY:** Read with your child. Ask questions about the pictures and stories that require more than a one-word answer.

**MAKE HIM THINK:** "What do you think is happening in this picture?" "How do you think the girl feels?"

#### TIP

*Follow it up. Ask another question based on your child's answer, such as, "How would you feel if that happened to you?"*

get  
your child  
involved

Everyday experiences with books make a child's world more interesting.

**HOW IT WORKS:** When you read and talk together about pictures and words, your child's language skills grow. Her understanding of the world grows, too.

**WHAT YOU NEED:** Simple books with repetition, rhymes and things she can touch and feel.



## Inviting ways to involve your child:

### Fill in the Blanks

**HOW TO PLAY:** Let your child fill in the last word of a sentence. Also, let him guess what comes on the next page.

**TRY THIS:** Talk about the title and book cover. What does your child think the book will be about?

### TIP

*Set him up for success. Play this game with your child's favorite books.*

### Get Touchy

**HOW TO PLAY:** Look at books with different fabrics to touch or textures to feel.

**WHAT IS IT:** Cover your child's eyes. Let her touch the page and guess what it is.

### TIP

*Talk about the way things feel on the page. Name other objects that feel the same.*

# sing & listen to music

Singing together  
is learning together.

**HOW IT WORKS:** Fill your house with songs and music.

**WHAT YOU NEED:** Your voice, a radio and CDs.

## Simple ways to share music:

### Sing It Again, Sam

**WHAT TO PLAY:** Sing your child's favorite songs.

**PLAY IT AGAIN, AND AGAIN:** Does he want to sing the *Itsy Bitsy Spider* 20 times? Then sing it 20 times.

#### TIP

*Repetition is good. It gives your child comfort.*

### Move to the Music

**HOW TO PLAY:** Sing songs with movements. Try *Head, Shoulders, Knees and Toes* or *The Wheels on the Bus*.

**GROUP PARTICIPATION:** Help your child join the fun. Show her the movements. Place her hands on her shoulders. Move her arms in circles.

#### TIP

*Encourage creativity. Clap when she makes up her own movements and sings along.*

# make & play instruments

Musical instruments are tools for the imagination.

**HOW IT WORKS:** Making up sounds and songs helps a child's creativity. It can also make you laugh. It's a great way to have fun together.

**WHAT YOU NEED:** Anything that can make music. Pots work. So does your tummy.

## Cute ways to create music:

### I've Got Rhythm

**HOW TO PLAY:** Show your child how he can play using parts of his body.

**ONE-MAN BAND:** Clap hands. Stomp feet. Pat knees or a tummy. Cluck tongues. Do a few at the same time.

#### TIP

*Mix and match. Pretend your nose is a horn. Let your child tap your nose and say "Beep!" each time he does.*

### Follow the Musical Leader

**HOW TO PLAY:** Make a series of sounds. Can your child repeat the pattern?

**ANY INSTRUMENT WILL DO:** Beat a drum, strum a guitar or bang a spoon against the table.

#### TIP

*Start slowly. Do one sound at a time until your child catches on.*

# play games with words & sounds

Sounds are the building blocks of words.

**HOW IT WORKS:** Help your child understand that sounds make up words.

**WHAT YOU NEED:** Word games. Simple and fun, they spark a child's interest in sounds and words.

## Fun ways to play with words:

### Silly Word “Mistakes”

**HOW TO PLAY:** Change a single sound of a familiar word and wait for your child to giggle.

**PLAY ANYWHERE, ANYTIME:** “Do you want chicken *doodle* soup for lunch?”

#### TIP

*Speak slowly and with a smile so your child knows you are teasing.*

### Sally Says the Same Sounds

**HOW TO PLAY:** Say a series of words that all begin with the same sound. Ask your child to repeat them.

**PICK A SOUND, ANY SOUND:** “Jet, Jelly, Jar, Jam, Jimmy, Jiggle.”

#### TIP

*After a while, let your child choose the sound and say words that start with that sound.*

# read & sing rhymes

Rhymes tickle the ears and the mind.

**HOW IT WORKS:** Rhymes help your child hear how sounds come together to form words.

**WHAT YOU NEED:** Rhymes you read, sing or make up.



## Great ways to make rhymes routine:

### Rhyme It, Don't Whine It

**HOW TO PLAY:** Rhyme, rap and sing your way through the day to make activities more fun.

**ANY ACTIVITY WILL DO:** “Johnny, that is you. You put on your shoe. It is blue.” You get the idea.

#### TIP

*Be an audience. Ask your child to try rhyming. Cheer when your child rhymes words — even if they are made up.*

### Mother Goose Goofs

**HOW TO PLAY:** Change the words to your favorite nursery rhymes. You are sure to get a laugh.

**OWN IT:** Plug in your child’s name or favorite things. “Rita had a little lamb, little lamb, little lamb.”

#### TIP

*Take requests. Ask your child to pick the person or object to sing about.*

# family tell stories

Family stories teach great lessons.

**HOW IT WORKS:** A child learns about her history and culture from family stories. These stories also help to build her language skills.

**WHAT YOU NEED:** You or other family members who can share stories or pictures about your family.

## Use family history to tell stories:

### Family Photo Album

**HOW TO PLAY:** Make a photo album of family members from a specific event, such as a birthday party or holiday.

**SAY CHEESE:** Make a point of taking pictures when your family is all together. Arrange the pictures in a book and use them to tell a story.

#### TIP

*Trade pictures with other family members who were at the event.*

### Remember the Time...

**HOW TO PLAY:** Help your child remember family stories.

**PICK A DAY:** "Remember when you went to the beach with Grandma and Grandpa?" Let your child tell the story the way he remembers it.

#### TIP

*Ask questions to help him remember details. Say, "Did you build sand castles with Grandma?"*

# tell your child's story

Stories about your child's life teach language and listening skills.

**HOW IT WORKS:** Have your child listen to or tell stories about herself. This helps her both to think creatively and to build her language skills.

**WHAT YOU NEED:** Memories about your child or stories that include her.

## Simple ways to tell your child's story:

### Play to the Crowd

**HOW TO PLAY:** Tell stories about topics that interest your child. Include your child in the story.

**ANY INTEREST WILL DO:** If your child, Jackson, likes lions, tell a story about lions who live in the zoo with a zookeeper named Jackson.

#### TIP

*Add other family members into the story. Name one of the lions after your son, another after your mom.*

### What a Day!

**HOW TO PLAY:** Ask your child to tell you the story of her day.

**START AT THE TOP:** Say, "Once upon a time, a little girl named Alicia woke up. Then what happened?"

#### TIP

*Help her along. Ask questions to remind your child about the things she did during the day.*

# make stories. active

Telling stories is the first step towards reading them.

**HOW IT WORKS:** When a child communicates with others and makes them smile, she feels good about herself.

**WHAT YOU NEED:** Puppets, dolls, stuffed animals or toys.

## Perfect ways to use pictures and props:

### Toy Stories

**HOW TO PLAY:** Ask your child to tell a story about a toy he really likes.

**HELP HIM ALONG:** Does your child love his train? Ask, “Where is your train going? Why is it going there?”

#### TIP

*Ask questions that need more than yes or no or one-word answers.*

### Puppet Show and Puppet Tell

**HOW TO PLAY:** Use puppets to tell stories. Put on a show for your child. Then let her put on a show for you.

**BROWN-BAG IT:** No real puppets around? Make your own out of socks or paper bags. Or draw faces on your fingers for instant “finger puppets.”

#### TIP

*Create an audience. Gather your child’s stuffed animals or dolls. Tell the story to them.*

# collect stories

Keep stories alive by writing them down.

**HOW IT WORKS:** Helping your child remember the people, things and stories that he loves will get him ready to read and write.

**WHAT YOU NEED:** Washable, nontoxic crayons, paper, safety scissors and stories.



## Creative ways to keep track of stories:

### Put It in Writing

**HOW TO PLAY:** Does your child want you to tell the same story again and again? This time, write it down.

**MAKE A BOOK:** Let your child scribble by the words you write. Tie or staple the pages together.

### TIP

*Do it together. Get your child to continue the story by asking, "And then what happened?" over and over. Write down what she says.*

### Stick It

**HOW TO PLAY:** Gather pictures of friends or your child's favorite things. Glue them on paper. Tell stories about them.

**PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT:** Let your child use safety scissors to practice cutting out the pictures. He can also cut pieces of ribbon or paper. Glue these on as decorations.

### TIP

*Save room to write. As you make up stories about the pictures, write them down.*

# use creative tools for scribbling, drawing & writing

Help your child create  
and play.

**HOW IT WORKS:** By giving your child different tools and materials to write and create, you help her enjoy writing.

**WHAT YOU NEED:** Art supplies and toys like sewing cards, blocks, puzzles and large lacing beads.

## Mix it up with materials:

### Handiwork

**HOW TO PLAY:** Give your child large lacing beads or food that can be strung.

**MIX IT UP:** There are a lot of things that can be used as the lace or the object. Try pipe cleaners, a shoe lace, dried pasta or Cheerios.<sup>®</sup>

#### TIP

*Use markers to decorate the lace or the object.*

### Touch and Tell

**HOW TO PLAY:** Have your child paste different things on paper. Ask him to touch the objects and talk with him about how they feel.

**GOOD TO PASTE:** Scraps of fabric, yarn, cotton balls, dried pasta or Popsicle<sup>®</sup> sticks are all good for pasting.

#### TIP

*Looks don't matter. You want your child to use his hands; it doesn't have to be pretty.*

# talk about scribbling, drawing & writing

Talk about what your child is doing as she creates a picture.

**HOW IT WORKS:** By creating, a child learns to think and imagine. It is the process of making pictures that matters, not what the picture looks like.

**WHAT YOU NEED:** Drawing materials and an open mind.

## Terrific ways to talk about writing:

### Be Interested

**HOW TO PLAY:** Ask your child to tell you what the drawing is about, instead of telling your child what you think the picture is.

**DO'S AND DON'TS:** Don't say, "I think this looks like a flower." Do say, "What did you draw here? What made you think of that?"

### TIP

*If you want to comment on what your child has drawn, be specific. Say, "I see you drew a green dot here." And then ask him about it.*

### Don't Go Changin'

**HOW TO PLAY:** Keep yourself from fixing up your child's drawings. Enjoy them for what they are.

**LET HIM SPEAK:** Ask your child about her drawing. Say, "What made you think of drawing a red dog?"

### TIP

*Take it a step further. Help her create a story around the objects in her picture.*

# get physical with scribbling drawing & writing

You don't need a gym to help your child learn to use his hands and fingers.

**HOW IT WORKS:** The best way to help your child use his finger and hand muscles is to let him play with washable, nontoxic crayons, markers, puzzles and blocks.

**WHAT YOU NEED:** Things to string, lace, wipe, spread, squirt or squeeze.

## Playful ways to get physical:

### Eat It Up

**HOW TO PLAY:** Let your child practice holding things by using silverware at mealtime.

**EAT, DRINK AND BE MERRY:** Let your child use child-friendly forks and spoons. Even if this makes a bit of a mess, it encourages coordination and independence.

### TIP

*Setting or clearing the table can help you and can be fun for your child.*

### Spread Around

**HOW TO PLAY:** Help your child use her fingers. Play with nontoxic finger paints or chocolate pudding. Make a mess.

**FUN WITH FOOD:** Try spraying whipped cream on the counter or use yogurt to paint a plate.

### TIP

*Clean it up, too. Give your child a spray bottle of water and a towel. She'll love to help wipe up the mess.*

# encourage scribbling drawing & writing

Markers moving in any direction are moving in the right direction.

**HOW IT WORKS:** When a child scribbles and pretends to write, he practices communicating through written language.

**WHAT YOU NEED:** Washable, nontoxic markers, crayons, chalk or paint.

## Super ways to encourage a scribble:

### Name That Scribble

**HOW TO PLAY:** If your child draws a picture and tells you what it is, write the word or name she gives you under or next to her picture.

**MAKE A BOOK:** Create a scribble book to keep all of her drawings together and add to it over time.

#### TIP

*Your child's scribble may not look like a bird, but that's okay.*

### Markers on the Move

**HOW TO PLAY:** Make scribbling fun. Pretend your child's marker is alive and moving.

**WHAT CAN IT DO:** "Can your marker dance?" "How fast can it spin?" "Can it run down the paper?"

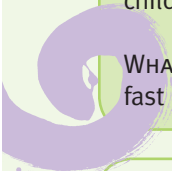
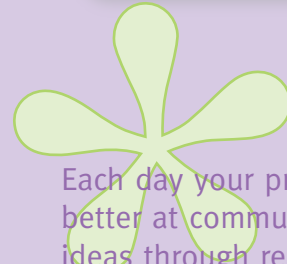
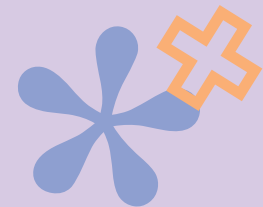
#### TIP

*Crayons work, too. Or see what your child's fingers can do with finger paint.*

# preschoolers

Each day your preschooler is becoming better at communicating her thoughts and ideas through reading, writing, talking, singing, playing and storytelling.

By listening to her and encouraging her learning through your everyday interactions, you can help her be successful in school and in life.



**In this section, you'll find the following topics:**

Talking and Listening ...	
Ask and answer questions	p. 41
Introduce new words	42
Talk and listen and talk	43
Create and keep up conversation	44
Reading ...	
Reading opportunities are everywhere	45
Make reading playful	46
Ask and encourage questions	47
Get your child involved	48
Songs and Rhymes ...	
Sing and listen to music	49
Make and play instruments	50
Play games with words and sounds	51
Read and sing rhymes	52
Stories ...	
Tell family stories	53
Tell your child's story	54
Make stories active	55
Collect stories	56
Writing and Drawing ...	
Use creative tools ...	57
Talk about scribbling, drawing and writing	58
Get physical with scribbling, drawing and writing	59
Encourage scribbling, drawing and writing	60

# ask & answer questions

The more children ask,  
the more they learn.

**HOW IT WORKS:** Talk to your child. Listen well and respond to her. When you do this, you encourage her to talk and ask questions.

**WHAT YOU NEED:** You, your child and a little patience.

## Clever ways to encourage questions:

### 20 Million Questions

**HOW TO PLAY:** Each time your child asks you why, answer. Then, ask him, “Why do you think?” This will get him to talk more.

**GO AHEAD, CHEAT A LITTLE:** Did your child understand your answer? Ask him a question to see. If he is having trouble, give him clues to help him answer you.

**TIP** *Let your child’s interests guide your conversations.*

### Let’s Be Phonies

**HOW TO PLAY:** Pick up the phone. Call a friend or relative. Let your child do the talking.

**PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT:** Prepare before you call. “When Uncle Bill answers, what are you going to say?”

**TIP** *Stay on the line to help the conversation along. Pick up another telephone or use a speakerphone.*

introduce

new  
words

Learning words is the key to understanding what we read.

**HOW IT WORKS:** The number of words a child learns in her first few years makes a difference in how she does in school when she gets older.

**WHAT YOU NEED:** You and your child. A children’s dictionary is also nice.



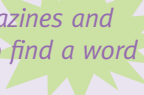
## Wacky ways to teach new words:

### Word of the Day

**HOW TO PLAY:** Teach your child one new word every day. Use it over and over. Say “outstanding” whenever something is really good.

**AND THE WINNER IS:** See who can use the word the most throughout the day.

### TIP



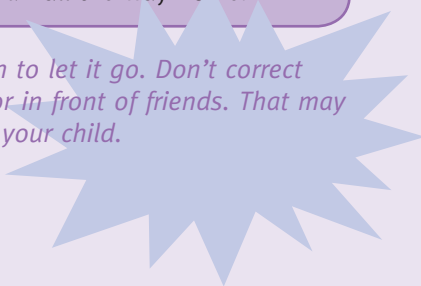
*The dictionary, books, magazines and signs are all great places to find a word of the day.*

### Kindergarten Cop

**HOW TO PLAY:** Gently fix word errors with simple examples or corrections.

**GO EASY ON ‘EM:** Your child says, “I runned home.” You say, “Wow, you *ran* all the way home!”


### TIP




*Know when to let it go. Don’t correct too often or in front of friends. That may embarrass your child.*



Conversations  
can be limitless.



**HOW IT WORKS:** Conversations are a way to teach children to communicate. Getting your child to talk is important. It doesn’t really matter what you talk about.



**WHAT YOU NEED:** You, your child and a little imagination.



## Cool ways to chat with your child:

### Talk Numbers

**HOW TO DO IT:** “How old are you?” “When is your birthday?” “How tall are you?” These are all great conversation starters.

**MOVE ON TO YOUR ADDRESS AND PHONE NUMBER:** “See these numbers on our door? They are 2-1-4. Our address is 214.”

#### TIP

*You can sing your phone number, address or other important information to make them easier to remember.*

### Live the Fantasy

**HOW TO PLAY:** Join your child’s pretend world. Have conversations in your pretend roles.

**STUFFED ANIMAL VERSION:** Have Piggy, Teddy or Baby talk to your child during dinner or baths.

#### TIP

*Get into the part. Change your voice to fit your role. You won’t win an Academy Award, but your child will appreciate it.*

# create & keep up conversation

Let your child be a conversation leader.

**HOW IT WORKS:** By truly listening and responding to your child, you encourage him to keep talking. This helps develop his language and self-confidence.

**WHAT YOU NEED:** You, your child and an open ear.



## Creative ways to chat:

### Follow the Leader

**HOW TO PLAY:** Build a conversation around your child's interests or what she wants to talk about.

**PAY ATTENTION:** You ask, "Do you think birds live in this tree?" She responds, "How far is the moon?" Talk about the moon.

### TIP

*Don't rush words. Give your child time to try to explain her ideas.*

### The Wonder of Why

**HOW TO PLAY:** Answer your child each time he says "Why?" or "How come?" He is trying to make sense of the world, and this is a great time to start a conversation.

**ADD ON:** If he asks "why" when you tell him to drink his milk, talk about how milk helps his bones grow strong so that he can run fast.

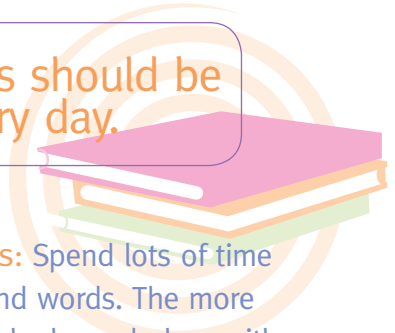
### TIP

*Listen to his questions. Listening and responding to your child teaches him that he matters.*



# reading opportunities are everywhere

Written words should be a part of every day.



**HOW IT WORKS:** Spend lots of time with letters and words. The more a young child looks and plays with letters and words, the more prepared she'll be for learning to read in school.

**WHAT YOU NEED:** Letters, written words and books, books, books.

## Ways to have fun with words:

### Reading Nooks

**HOW TO PLAY:** Make your house reader friendly. Keep children's books around the house.

**NO SHELVES NEEDED:** Baskets and buckets work. Make sure that the books are easy for your child to reach.

### TIP

*If you get age-appropriate magazines or catalogs, leave them in your child's spot at the table for him to find at his next meal.*

### Names and Letters

**HOW TO PLAY:** Pick one letter in your child's name. Say the letter, write it down and trace it on your child's hand. Show her the letter on signs, books or labels.

**EYE SPY:** Ask your child to point out the letter when she spots it during the day.

### TIP

*When she shows you the letter, repeat it and read the word: "J—juice."*



make  
reading  
playful

Books are fun and help your child prepare for school.

**HOW IT WORKS:** Playing around with books and words helps build a child's language skills.

**WHAT YOU NEED:** Books or items to create your own books, like paper, crayons and glue.

## Fabulous ways to make reading fun:

### Role-Play

**HOW TO PLAY:** Create a mini play. You play one role from a book. Your child can play the other.

**MAKE IT UP:** Talk about what happens to the characters after the story ends. Act it out.

### TIP

*Switch roles. Let your child see what it feels like to be the other person.*

### The Writer Is Me

**HOW TO PLAY:** Make a book with your child. Use paper and yarn, staples, pipe cleaners or glue to hold the pages together.

**WRITTEN BY:** Have your child write on or color the pages. Print his name on the cover.

### TIP

*Share it. Encourage your child to read his story to family or friends.*

# ask & encourage questions

An important part of reading a book is talking about it.

**HOW IT WORKS:** When you and your child talk about what you read, your child learns more than just the story.

**WHAT YOU NEED:** Books of all kinds.

## Ideas for asking interesting questions:

### What's Happening?

**HOW TO PLAY:** Ask questions that make your child talk and think about the story.

**AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION:** Ask, "What will happen next?" or "What else could the boy have done?"

#### TIP

*It's okay if your child doesn't have all the answers. Ask more questions to help get to an answer.*

### There's No Such Thing as a Dumb Question

**HOW TO PLAY:** Tell your child to ask questions when looking at books. Take time to answer.

**YOU DON'T NEED TO UNDERSTAND:** Pictures bring up all kinds of ideas for a child. A question may not be tied to the story. Answer it anyway.

#### TIP

*Be patient. It can take a child a lot of time to express a thought.*

# get your child involved

Involve your child with  
the written word.

**HOW IT WORKS:** Before a child can read, she needs to learn that words have meaning. This skill comes from practicing with you.

**WHAT YOU NEED:** The printed word. Look at books, magazines, letters or signs.

## Inviting ways to involve your child:

### Tell It Like It Is

**HOW TO PLAY:** Read simple books to your child. Then ask her to “read” to you.

**CHOOSING A BOOK:** Pick books that repeat words, short sentences or actions. These are patterns that help a child guess what comes next.

### TIP

*Read a bit and then pause. Give your child a chance to complete the sentence.*

### Gee, That Sounds Familiar

**HOW TO PLAY:** As you read, point out words and short sentences that your child knows. Ask your child to join in.

**WHAT’S THAT:** Point out numbers, colors, letters, animals and other things your child knows. Ask him to name them or describe them.

### TIP

*Point to it. Show your child the words on the page as you talk about them.*

# sing & listen to music

Singing is like playing—  
with words.

**HOW IT WORKS:** Help your child connect words with their meanings.

**WHAT YOU NEED:** Songs and rhymes of any kind, even ones you make up yourself.



## Simple ways to share music:

### Sing-a-long

HOW TO PLAY: Sing a familiar song to your child, such as *The ABCs* or *Row, Row, Row Your Boat*.

CHALLENGE HIM: Start to sing with him, then stop. See how far he can continue by himself.

### TIP

*“The Wheels on the House?” Sing it wrong and let your child fix your mistake.*

### Sing, Sing, Bo-bing

HOW TO PLAY: Use names to sing silly rhyming songs, like “Kelly, kelly bo-belly, banana fanna fo felly, me my mo melly, Kelly.”

PICK AN OBJECT, ANY OBJECT: Does your child like animals? Make up a silly song or rhyme about a cat, its hat and how it is fat.

### TIP

*Put your child in charge. Have her pick the name or object for the song.*

# make & play instruments

Making music does  
magic for the mind.



**HOW IT WORKS:** Making up songs and rhythms helps children express feelings. It also helps them understand the sounds and parts of language.

**WHAT YOU NEED:** Musical instruments (real or pretend).

## Cute ways to create music:

### **Bang It, Chant It**

**HOW TO PLAY:** Beat a drum or pot as you say each part of a long word.

**FOR EXAMPLE:** Say “hippopotamus” and then break the word into smaller parts as you bang on the drum “hip (bang) – po (bang) – pot (bang) – a (bang) – mus (bang).”

**TIP**

*Repeat your chant and drum beat over and over again.*

### **Concert in the Kitchen**

**HOW TO PLAY:** Give your child a microphone and ask him to sing a favorite song.

**WHERE TO GET A MICROPHONE:** Visit a toy store or use household items. A hairbrush or an empty toilet paper or paper towel roll will do.

**TIP**

*Props help. A radio, CD player or dress-up clothes will add to the act.*

© 2006 Civitas. All rights reserved.

# play games with words & sounds

**Start your child on  
the road to reading.**

**HOW IT WORKS:** Show your child how letters make sounds and how sounds make up words. Playing around with sounds and words will help a child understand how to sound out words on a page.

**WHAT YOU NEED:** Simple words, rhyming words or songs.



## Fun ways to play with words:

### Rhyme Time

**HOW TO PLAY:** Say a word. Make it into a different word by changing one sound. “Let’s start with bat and change it to cat.” Ask your child if she can think of other words that rhyme with bat.

**MADE-UP WORDS COUNT:** Your child may come up with “dat” or “zat.” This is good.

**TIP** *Explain how simply changing the first letter of a word can make a new word.*

### Song Switcheroo

**HOW TO PLAY:** Make up new words to your child’s favorite songs.

**ANY SONG WILL DO:** “Twinkle, twinkle little bear” or “Happy birthday to meatballs.”

**TIP** *Let your child pick the song and join in the singing.*

# read & sing rhymes

**Rhyming is a step toward reading!**

**HOW IT WORKS:** Rhymes allow children to test out sounds and learn how words are similar.

**WHAT YOU NEED:** Rhymes ... from a book, a CD or your imagination.

## Great ways to make rhymes routine:

### For No Rhyme or Reason

**HOW TO PLAY:** Go crazy with rhymes. Rhyme in the car, during bath time or while taking a walk.

**MADE-UP WORDS COUNT:** If you pass a brick wall, break into *Humpty Dumpty*. Visiting a farm calls for *Baa, Baa, Black Sheep*.

**TIP** *Hum the tune. Can your child guess which rhyme you are humming?*

### Read and Remember

**HOW TO PLAY:** Read lots of children's rhymes. Throughout the week, see how many you and your child can say by memory.

**RHYME AWAY THE TIME:** This game is great when waiting in line or traffic.

**TIP** *Put a rhyme book in your bag or car for your child.*

# family tell stories

Children love to hear family stories. As they listen, they learn.

**HOW IT WORKS:** Hearing family stories helps a child learn about language, his family and himself, and builds listening skills and a love of storytelling.

**WHAT YOU NEED:** Family stories, papers and pictures.

Use family history to tell stories:

### Traditional Talk

**HOW TO PLAY:** Tell stories about your culture and family traditions. Teach your child about them.

**IN YOUR HOUSE:** What kinds of food do you eat? Do you sing special songs at birthdays?

### TIP

*Pass it on. Have your child take part in these traditions. They will become a part of her life, too.*

### Picture This

**HOW TO PLAY:** Help your child find old family pictures, diaries or letters.

**ASK RELATIVES:** Other family members might have pictures and papers. They may have stories to tell about them.

### TIP

*Make a book. Help your child put these things in a book. Write down what you learned about each thing.*

# tell your child's story

Telling stories is a step toward reading them.

**HOW IT WORKS:** Telling stories helps a child learn that there is a beginning, a middle and an end to stories you tell and to stories you read or write.

**WHAT YOU NEED:** Storytelling time and ideas.

## Simple ways to tell your child's story:

### Add On

**HOW TO PLAY:** Start to tell a story about your child. Ask your child to add to it. Take turns telling what comes next.

**AND THEN:** You say, "Zeke went to see the zebra at the zoo. And then ..." Your child says, "Zeke got scared."

### TIP

*Take it up a level: Ask your child to tell you the whole story of Zeke and the zebra.*

### Spill the Beans

**HOW TO PLAY:** Ask your child to tell you about a recent event or activity.

**QUESTION HER:** Ask, "Do you remember Sara's birthday party? What did you do? Who was there?"

### TIP

*Creative questions help. "What was on Sara's cake?"*

# make stories. active

Play with language  
by telling stories.

**HOW IT WORKS:** Having your child tell stories gets him excited about reading.

**WHAT YOU NEED:** You, your child and objects around the house to make it playful.

## Perfect ways to use pictures and props:

### The Object Is

**HOW TO PLAY:** Give your child a group of toys. Try to make up a story using them.

**USE WHAT'S AROUND:** A doll, a teddy bear or a toy car — choose items that interest your child. Start the story. "One day Teddy went for a walk." Let your child add on using the other toys.

#### TIP

*Look around. Grow the story by bringing in other objects.*

### Life Stories

**HOW TO PLAY:** Find pictures of family and friends. Have your child tell their life stories.

**A LITTLE HELP GOES A LONG WAY:** Ask questions that will help your child tell the story. "Who is this? And she is related to whom? Where does she live?"

#### TIP

*Make a book. Let your child draw a picture of one of the people. Help her write her story next to it.*

# collect stories

Teach your child how to tell a good story.

**HOW IT WORKS:** Storytelling teaches a child how to communicate and use language. It can also build his confidence to learn to read and write.

**WHAT YOU NEED:** You, your child and washable, nontoxic crayons, markers or colored pencils.

## Creative ways to keep track of stories:

### Walking and Talking

**HOW TO PLAY:** Go for a walk. Look for interesting animals and things. Make up a story about them. Write it down together.

**PICTURES ARE GOOD:** Have your child draw pictures next to the words.

#### TIP

*Give your child a small notebook and crayon to bring on the walk and have him draw what he sees.*

### My First Diary

**HOW TO PLAY:** Ask your child to tell you three things that happened to her today or things she wants to do tomorrow. Help her write them down.

**COUNTING COUNTS:** Number each thing as you go. This will help your child learn numbers.

#### TIP

*Hang them up. Put pictures and memories on a bulletin board or the refrigerator so your child can look at them.*

# use creative tools for scribbling, drawing & writing

Put some fun into  
writing practice.

**HOW IT WORKS:** When you allow your child to work with his hands and fingers, you encourage his writing, creativity and spelling skills at the same time.

**WHAT YOU NEED:** Puzzles, drawing supplies, blocks and even food will do.

## Mix it up with materials:

### Eat the Alphabet

**HOW TO PLAY:** Play with food. Make letters out of different kinds of food.

**TOOLS INCLUDE:** Cooked noodles, pretzel sticks and carrots are all great for making into letters.

TIP

*Start to spell. Bake alphabet cookies. Have fun making words and eating.*

### A Is For ...

**HOW TO PLAY:** Go through old magazines to find things that start with each letter of the alphabet.

**GETTING STARTED:** Help your child use safety scissors to cut out the pictures. Put the pictures together to make a book.

TIP

*Try to find magazines or catalogs full of pictures your child will like. Pictures of animals or cars and trucks are often favorites.*

# talk about scribbling, drawing & writing

Talk about your child's work,  
but don't judge it.

**HOW IT WORKS:** By talking about how your child created a picture, you encourage her to draw more.

**WHAT YOU NEED:** Drawing materials and an open mind.



## Terrific ways to talk about writing:

### Tell Me about It

**HOW TO PLAY:** Do your child's drawings or writing look like real images or words? Ask him to tell you about them.

**GOOD TO SAY:** "Can you tell me about what is happening in this part of the picture?"

### TIP

*Your child may write some letters backwards, misspell a word or draw a boat under the water. This is all okay.*

### The Facts, Just the Facts

**HOW TO PLAY:** Comment on the action of drawing rather than how good the picture is.

**WHAT TO SAY:** Talk about the specifics. "I see that you drew a straight line here and a curvy line there," or "I notice that you used three different colors in your picture."

### TIP

*Encourage your child by saying, "It looks like you're having fun," and "I see you're using a purple crayon now. How pretty."*

# get physical with scribbling drawing & writing

Prepare for school by building muscle control and coordination.

**HOW IT WORKS:** Although a child may know the A-B-C's, he won't be able to write them unless he can use his hands and fingers.

**WHAT YOU NEED:** Safety scissors, paper, pens, washable, nontoxic crayons or markers.



## Playful ways to get physical:

### Cut It Out

**HOW TO PLAY:** Help your child cut with safety scissors. Make sure to supervise.

**WHAT TO CUT:** Long narrow strips of paper (the easiest thing for little hands to cut), ribbon, magazine pictures, paper shapes, newspaper, wrapping paper or Play-Doh.®

### TIP

*Paste the items on paper. Help your child make a picture with the pieces and write down what she pastes on the page.*

### A Fine Line

**HOW TO PLAY:** Help your child test his hand at tracing.

**FOLLOW THIS:** Outline letters and shapes on a piece of paper and have your child trace them. Or make a connect-the-dots puzzle and let your child make the connections.

### TIP

*Use a thick pencil. It's easier for small hands to hold and mistakes can be erased.*

encourage  
scribbling  
drawing &  
writing

Scribble grows more meaningful through play.

**HOW IT WORKS:** As your child practices writing, you will see that her marks look more like real letters.

**WHAT YOU NEED:** Washable, nontoxic markers, crayons, chalk or paint.

## Super ways to encourage a scribble:

### Play-Write

**HOW TO PLAY:** Work writing into your child's pretend play.

**GOOD GAMES:** Play "grocery store" and ask your child to write a grocery list. Play "restaurant" and ask your child to take your order.

### TIP

*Ask your child to read what she has written. It's okay if she makes it up.*

### Write Everywhere

**HOW TO PLAY:** Keep writing supplies with you to use at the doctor's office, on the bus or at a store.

**DRAWING ON THE GO:** Waiting for your meal to come at a restaurant? Pull out some crayons and draw on the paper napkins or place mats.

### TIP

*Be creative with your paper. Use a paper tablecloth, write on a postcard or use colored construction paper.*

Special thanks to Kimberly Boller, PhD, M. Susan Burns, PhD, Kathy Hirsh-Pasek, PhD, Erika Hoff, PhD, Allyssa McCabe, PhD, Robert Needleman, MD, Nina Sazer O'Donnell, and Cheri Vogel, PhD, for the generous donation of their valuable time and expertise in reviewing these materials.

Localization information can go here.

Made possible with the support of



*Born Learning*<sup>SM</sup> is a public engagement campaign helping parents, caregivers and communities create early learning opportunities for young children. Designed to support you in your critical role as a child's first teacher, *Born Learning* educational materials are made available through the efforts of United Way, United Way Success By 6 and Civitas.

For more information, visit us online at [www.bornlearning.org](http://www.bornlearning.org).



Civitas thanks **Parents as Teachers**, an international early childhood parent education and family support program, for their ongoing support.