



Beacon Education

Supporting Christian schooling worldwide

Literacy in the pre-school years



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Literacy in the pre-school years

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- Reading starts with listening and speaking.
- It is important for children to have exposure to language from the time they are born.
- They are collecting the vocabulary they will need to be ready to read.

Other ways to develop vocabulary

- Play situations, e.g. pretend play such as shops, building together
- Play involves experimenting with language, making up scripts, using imagination
- Creating together

Make a pretend shop or market stand to get children talking together.









Literacy in the home

Parents can be encouraged to:

- Talk to their children even when they are babies
- Read signs with children when out in the community
- Point to names of produce in the market or supermarket
- Cross items off a shopping list
- Read books with children or tell stories them.



Language and listening

- We have been created with an ability to learn a language.
- Children learn their mother-tongue by listening to their parents.
- Research shows children under the age of 5 have a special ability for language learning.
- The kindergarten is therefore a good place to start learning a second language.

Listening and speaking go together

- Reading starts with listening and speaking.
- We can encourage children to identify sounds in the environment – wind and rain, birds and other animals
- near/far sounds; high/low sounds in music

Awareness of sounds

- Matching up sounds with letters is called “Phonics.”
- But children need practice in identifying the sounds that the letters make before they are introduced to the letter symbols.
- They can also listen for words that rhyme.

Teaching initial sounds

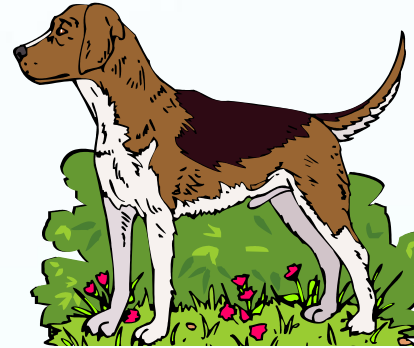
- *Initial sounds* are the sounds words begin with,
- Example, “cat” starts with “c”

Listening activities

Children listen for initial sounds, without seeing letters.

- Say: What sound can you hear at the beginning of “**c**at”
- Which words rhyme? *cat* *pot* *rat*
- Clap word syllables, e.g. their name – Jo/seph
- Guess the word I am saying, e.g. fl – a – g
- Play listening games such as “I spy”.

Picture or object collection for initial sounds



Activity

Take a look at the set of pictures of objects for *initial sounds*. (See “Literacy Games and Activities”.)

You can photocopy these and colour them to make them more attractive.

Beginning to gain an interest in print

- Children will experiment with 'pretending' to write.
- They need plenty of writing materials for experimentation
- Pointing out signs in the environment helps them understand what words are.
- Children can be shown words in story books. By pointing to the words as you read they will see that there are spaces in-between words.

Word shapes

- Words have shapes
- Children start by identifying shapes around them – circles, triangles, squares
- Jig saw puzzles, play equipment of different shapes help children identify shapes
- Also ‘which is different’ games and activities

Reading readiness

Readiness is the step before reading.

In the preschool years:

- small finger muscles are being developed ready for writing.
- they learn language through songs, stories and rhymes
- puzzles and shape activities help their eyes to get ready to see the shapes that words make

Are they ready?

- It is important not to introduce children to formal reading and writing unless they have had plenty of readiness activities.
- Some children at Year 3 may have missed out on vital readiness activities.
- A literacy assistant can provide the non-reader with activities such as word games and listening games
- and read stories to the student to gain their interest

Activity

- Make a list of the things that can prepare a child to read.

Revision

- How do babies and young children develop language?
- What activities can help pre-school children in language development?
- How can parents help to develop a child's language in the home?
- Why is listening important?
- What activities can we do to encourage listening?
- What are initial sounds?
- What is the first step to teaching initial sounds?
- How can a picture collection help to teach initial sounds?
- How can children be encouraged to see the shapes of words?