

Session 3: Getting ready for Reading, Writing and Numeracy (Under 5 years)

Language development in the pre-school years.

Children will develop their language through:

- Conversation
- Stories read or told to them
- Play situations, e.g. shops, building together, dramatic play
- Creating together

Language and listening

We have been created with an ability to learn a language. Children learn their mother-tongue by listening to their parents. Children under the age of 5 have a special ability to learn languages. The kindergarten is therefore a good place to start learning a second language. Reading starts with listening and speaking. Listening and speaking go together.

Listening gets the children ready for learning PHONICS.

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.

Listening activities

We can encourage children to listen. They can identify sounds in the environment, near/far sounds; high/low sounds in music. They can listen for the sounds around them: animal sounds, sounds of wind and rain, and to hear how words rhyme.

Games: Simon Says; Clap what I clap

Encourage young children to *listen* for sounds, without seeing letters.

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

At this stage, don’t show them the alphabet symbols, but use pictures of objects.

Starting to recognize that words have shapes - Beginning to gain an interest in print

- 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

Children start by identifying shapes around them – circles, triangles, squares. Teachers can help develop this ability by providing jig saw puzzles, toys of different shapes and ‘which is different’ activities.

Getting ready for writing

- Children will experiment with 'pretending' to write. They need plenty of writing materials for experimentation.
- Their finger muscles can be developed through finger plays, play dough, picking up small objects

Reading readiness

Readiness is the step before reading.

- they learn language through conversations, songs, stories and rhymes
- they develop listening skills to get them ready for hearing the sounds of letters, (phonics)
- they start to recognize shapes through activities that will help their eyes see the shapes that words make, e.g. cutting and pasting shapes, jigsaw puzzles, which is different activities
- small finger muscles are being developed ready for writing.

Are they ready?

It is important not to introduce children to formal reading and writing unless they have had plenty of pre-reading experiences. If a child misses vital readiness activities, they may not have good comprehension once they start formal reading. That is, they may be able to read the words, but do not understand the meaning. They may also be poor in expressing their ideas in sentences when they start to write their own stories. It's a bit like learning to crawl before you learn to walk.