



Parent's Guide to Emergent Literacy

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What is emergent literacy?

Emergent literacy is what children know about reading and writing before they can actually read or write. Young children's emergent literacy skills are the building blocks for later reading and writing. Children learn these skills before they start school, and this begins in infancy. From birth throughout the preschool years, children develop knowledge of spoken language, the sounds that form words, letters, writing, and books. This is the beginning of the abilities that children need to be able to learn to read and write in school.

Why parents are the best "teachers" to get their child ready for learning to read

- Children begin to get ready to read long before they start school.
- Young children often have short attention spans but enjoy repeating favorite activities. Parents can share these activities frequently for short amounts of time throughout the day.
- Parents know their children well and can take advantage of times when their child is in the "mood."
- Other family members can become involved, which means that the child will have several different people with whom to practice.
- Many preschool programs do not teach these skills specifically, and they cannot provide the one-on-one teaching that parents can.
- Children who do not develop phonological sensitivity on their own are unlikely to get much help from anyone other than their parents.

Additional information and resources

- Your local library can provide information regarding appropriate picture books for different ages and may offer parent workshops on ways to share books with children at different ages.
- If you are concerned about your child's development, you should speak with your child's pediatrician.
- The National Research Council published a book of information and activities for teachers and parents of young children focused on emergent literacy and beginning reading. The book, *Starting Out Right: A Guide to Promoting Children's Reading Success*, can be loaned from your library or read on-line at www.nap.edu/books/0309064104/html/index.html.
- The Public Library Association has information, programs, and links concerning early reading at www.pla.org/preschool.html.
- The National Center for Family Literacy supports family literacy services for families across the U.S. Contact them to find information about family literacy programs in your area at www.familit.org.
- The Center for Improvement of Early Reading Achievement provides information and resources for teachers and parents aimed at improving the reading achievement of children at www.ciera.org.

THE EARLY LITERACY INITIATIVE

A PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN THE PUBLIC LIBRARY ASSOCIATION AND THE
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