

# Emergent Literacy

## What is Emergent Literacy?

Children don't learn to read overnight. In fact, the process of learning to read and write is a slow one, evolving and maturing over years. Starting in the early years of childhood, it begins with things like:

- ★ The ability to identify letters, numbers and shapes,
- ★ The awareness of sounds
- ★ Understanding some common print concepts (for example, print generally goes from left to right and from top to bottom)

The term **emergent literacy** is used to describe a variety of early behaviors and skills associated with successful reading and writing development. These fundamental skills, which develop during the first five years of life, contribute to a child's foundations for literacy and learning

## Why Emergent Literacy Matters

**Emergent literacy matters because it forms the foundation for future learning, which is important to achieving success in school and social settings.**

Here are just a few reasons why it is never too early to help promote literacy skills through everyday interactions with your child:

- ★ Vocabulary knowledge at kindergarten is strongly related to 7th grade reading skills.
- ★ Children with better language skills are less likely to have behavior problems from kindergarten to 3rd grade.



- ★ There is an 88% chance that children behind in literacy during 1st grade will remain behind when they reach 4th grade.

This does not mean that your job as a parent is to teach your child to read and write before their first day of kindergarten. But you can help lay the foundation for literacy through your everyday interactions with your child. It is that easy- smiling at your newborn, babbling with your baby, counting with your toddler, pointing out words on signs and cereal boxes with your preschooler – all of these simple, every day moments are some of the most important ways you can prepare your child for success in school and in life.

### What to Expect, and When

#### At three to four years, most children can:

- ★ Make themselves understood to strangers, despite some pronunciation errors.
- ★ Speak sentences of five or six words.
- ★ Tell stories.
- ★ Use more complex grammar, such as plurals and past tense.
- ★ Understand sentences involving time concepts (for example, “Grandma is coming tomorrow”) and describe past experiences.
- ★ Understand size comparisons such as big and bigger.
- ★ Understand the concept of same and different.
- ★ Understand relationships expressed by “if... then” or “because” sentences.
- ★ Follow a series of two to four related directions, such as “Please pick up the blocks and put them in this box.”
- ★ Sing a song and repeat at least one nursery rhyme.



#### At four to five years, most children can:

- ★ Combine multiple thoughts into one sentence.
- ★ Ask “when?” “how?” and “why?” questions.
- ★ Use words like “can,” “will,” “should,” and “might.”
- ★ Refer to cause and effect by using “because” and “so.”
- ★ Follow three unrelated commands appropriately.
- ★ Understand comparatives like loud, louder, loudest.
- ★ Use future tense.
- ★ Say name and address.
- ★ Listen to and tell longer stories (but may misinterpret the facts).
- ★ Understand sequencing of events when clearly explained (for example, “First we plug the drain, then we run the water, and finally we take a bath”).

### What Parents Can Do

There are many ways parents and caregivers can promote children’s language development during the preschool years. Here are a few suggestions:

- ★ **CREATE A HOME LIBRARY.** Collect books and magazines from bookstores, garage sales, or use the school or public library.
- ★ **READ BOOKS TOGETHER.** Ask questions as you read, and give your child time to respond. When reading: clarify/ explain the harder words; explain new words; describe new ideas, concepts; provide exposure to the structure of stories.
- ★ **ACT OUT STORIES OR POEMS WITH YOUR CHILD.** Ask her to think about how characters might be feeling or why they may act the way they do.
- ★ **PLAY RHYMING GAMES,** sing rhyming songs, and read nursery rhymes with your child.
- ★ **TELL STORIES.** Tell stories about your family, your childhood, or anything that you are interested in sharing.
- ★ **ENCOURAGE YOUR CHILD TO LISTEN TO THE DIFFERENT SOUNDS IN WORDS.** For example, say your child’s name and ask him to think of other words that start with the same sound: Danny- dish, dog, dinner.
- ★ **COLOR, WRITE, AND DRAW WITH YOUR CHILD.** Give him the materials needed (paper, crayons, colored pencils etc.), then ask your child to tell you about his creation.