

# BUILDING LITERACY SKILLS FROM INFANCY TO ADULTHOOD

## INFANTS & TODDLERS



### TALK ALL THE TIME

- ▶ The more words they hear, the more babies learn.
- ▶ Narrate your day: *"Let's go to the car. Wow! It's really sunny today. Ok, let's put you in your car seat."*

### MODEL READING AND WRITING

- ▶ Keep books, magazines and newspapers you like to read around the house.
- ▶ Let your child see you read and hear you talk about what you're reading. Don't worry if your baby doesn't understand at first; you're showing them what it's like to learn from reading.
- ▶ Talk out loud about what you're writing, whether it's a letter, email or grocery list.

### READ ALOUD TO YOUR BABY EVERY DAY

- ▶ Use funny voices, act out the story, point to pictures and ask questions.
- ▶ It's ok to skip around. If your baby turns to a different page, go with it.
- ▶ Feel free to read aloud from a magazine or a novel you find interesting.

### PROVIDE BOOKS THAT APPEAL TO BABIES

- ▶ Easy-to-handle fabric and board books, books with photos, especially faces
- ▶ Learning books that teach your child ABCs or 1-2-3s
- ▶ Rhyming or singalong books

### START "WRITING" EARLY

- ▶ Any kind of mark on paper is a great start.
- ▶ Provide finger paints, thick markers or crayons.
- ▶ For less mess, try a magnetic drawing toy like a Magna Doodle or a tablet drawing program.

### MAKE TIME TO PLAY

- ▶ Singing, nursery rhymes and pat-a-cake games all help babies learn words.
- ▶ Passing a ball or toy helps develop back-and-forth communication.
- ▶ Imaginative play like dress up, make believe and blocks all support literacy.

**NOTE TO PARENTS:** It's important to keep screen time to a minimum but if your baby does tune in, choose educational shows like Signing Time, ABC videos and PBS KIDS. And remember that building literacy skills doesn't have to be expensive. Check out your local public library, yard sales, second-hand stores, BuyNothing and other community groups for free or low-cost books. Cardboard boxes make great building blocks and toy kitchens.



**Boston Children's Hospital**  
Down Syndrome Program

# BUILDING LITERACY SKILLS FROM INFANCY TO ADULTHOOD YOUNG CHILDREN



## TALK ALL THE TIME

- ▶ Introduce new vocabulary words.
- ▶ Label items, describe meanings of words and point to words when you read.

## MODEL READING AND WRITING

- ▶ Have books/magazines/newspapers you like to read around the house.
- ▶ Let your child see you read. Talk about what you are reading and writing – a letter, an email, a grocery list.

## READ ALOUD EVERY DAY

- ▶ Point to the words as you read to show that words are read left to right.
- ▶ Feel free to read aloud something you want to read (like a magazine or a novel).
- ▶ Read together taking turns with words or pages.
- ▶ Ask questions, make predictions about what will happen and review what happened.

## PROVIDE BOOKS THAT ARE INTERESTING TO YOUNG CHILDREN

- ▶ Nursery rhymes, story books and informational books
- ▶ Longer stories or “easy to read” chapter books

## START “WRITING” EARLY

- ▶ Set up a writing area. Have writing materials accessible.
- ▶ Have your child help you make a list or leave messages.
- ▶ Cut words and pictures out from boxes (e.g. cereal) and use to make a shopping list.
- ▶ For less mess, try a Magna Doodle toy or a tablet drawing program.
- ▶ Let your child dictate a story or a letter.

## PLAY TIME CAN SUPPORT LITERACY TOO

- ▶ Pretend play contributes to literacy skills. Use clothes, play dishes, empty boxes and other materials you have in your home.
- ▶ Turn-taking games help develop back-and-forth communication.
- ▶ Minimize screens. Choose educational DVDs or shows (e.g. Signing Time, PBS Kids).
- ▶ Audio books are a great way for children to look at books while hearing words.

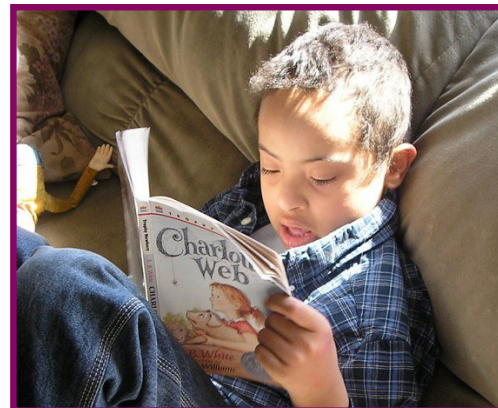
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# BUILDING LITERACY SKILLS FROM INFANCY TO ADULTHOOD

## SCHOOL-AGE CHILDREN



### TALK ALL THE TIME

- ▶ Talk about interests and find books to learn more.
- ▶ Hearing more words helps kids build a bigger and better vocabulary.

### PROVIDE INTERESTING BOOKS

- ▶ Offer informational books as well as fiction.
- ▶ Comic books/graphic novels can be a good transition from picture to chapter books.
- ▶ Look for age-appropriate themes at the child's reading level.
- ▶ Try chapter books or harder books to increase vocabulary.

### READ ALOUD EVERY DAY

- ▶ Read together taking turns with pages or chapters.
- ▶ Have discussions on what you are reading. Make predictions.
- ▶ Foster independent reading by reading your own book while your child reads theirs.
- ▶ Have your child read to you.

### MODEL READING AND WRITING

- ▶ Have books/magazines/newspapers you like to read around the house.
- ▶ Let your child see you read.
- ▶ Talk about what you are reading.

### PRACTICE WRITING REGULARLY

- ▶ Set up a writing area. Have writing materials accessible.
- ▶ Have your child help you make lists.
- ▶ Older kids may enjoy making greeting cards, writing letters or keeping a journal.
- ▶ Try letting the child dictate to you or using a dictation app.
- ▶ Find a pen pal or an email pal.

### PLAY TIME CAN SUPPORT LITERACY TOO

- ▶ Find apps to work on reading or play games that promote literacy.
- ▶ Play fun board games like Boggle, Clue Junior or Apples to Apples Junior.
- ▶ Minimize screens. Choose educational DVDs or shows (e.g. Signing Time, PBS Kids, NOVA ScienceNOW).
- ▶ Audio books are a great way for children to look at books while hearing words.

**NOTE TO PARENTS:** Building literacy skills doesn't have to be expensive. Check out your local public library, yard sales, second-hand stores, BuyNothing and other community groups for free or low-cost books. Cardboard boxes make great building blocks and toy kitchens.



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# BUILDING LITERACY SKILLS FROM INFANCY TO ADULTHOOD TEENS AND BEYOND



## TALK ALL THE TIME

- ▶ Talk about interests and find books to learn more.
- ▶ Hearing more words helps young people build a bigger and better vocabulary.

## PROVIDE INTERESTING BOOKS

- ▶ Offer informational books as well as fiction.
- ▶ Comic books/graphic novels may hold interest.
- ▶ Look for age-appropriate themes at the young person's reading level.
- ▶ Suggest chapter books or harder books to increase vocabulary.

## READ ALOUD EVERY DAY

- ▶ Read together taking turns with pages or chapters.
- ▶ Have discussions on what you are reading, and make predictions.
- ▶ Foster independent reading by reading your own book while the young person reads theirs.
- ▶ Have the young person read to you or to younger children.

## MODEL READING AND WRITING

- ▶ Have books/magazines/newspapers you like to read around the house.
- ▶ Let the young person see you read, talk about what you are reading, or read and discuss the same book.

## PRACTICE WRITING REGULARLY

- ▶ Set up a writing area. Have writing materials accessible.
- ▶ Have the young person help you make lists.
- ▶ Write greeting cards, letters or in a journal.
- ▶ Work on independence using a dictation app.
- ▶ Find a pen pal or an email pal.

## FUN TIME CAN SUPPORT LITERACY TOO

- ▶ Find apps to work on reading or play games like Scrabble that promote literacy.
- ▶ Minimize screens. Choose educational DVDs or shows (e.g. NOVA ScienceNOW, Born this Way, Speechless).
- ▶ Download audiobooks.

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