

Learning to Read & Write Begins at Birth



A Guide to Early Literacy in Child Care



America's most trusted child care resource.

1-800-424-2246

ChildCareAware.org



How Your Child Learns to Read and Write Begins with You.

You help your child every day without even thinking about it when you sing a lullaby to your baby, say a silly rhyme to your toddler or read your child a favorite bedtime story.

You know these things make your child feel loved, safe and happy. Did you also know you are helping your child learn skills needed for reading, writing and school success?

You and your family are always your child's first and best teachers. Build on what you do at home by making sure that your child is having fun with reading and writing in child care, too.

**Look inside for 5
simple steps to
literary success**

Five Steps to Reading and Writing Success

1

Call the Experts

This brochure provides information on how you and your child's caregiver can best build your child's early reading and writing skills. A call to your local Child Care Resource & Referral agency (CCR&R) can give you additional information about literacy resources.



Learning to read and write doesn't happen all at once.

2

Learn About Literacy

Learning to read and write is like learning to walk. You can see it happening: first, your child rolls over, then inches along the floor and eventually crawls. But when your child takes the first step, it's magic!

While it feels like magic when it finally happens (usually around ages 5 to 7), reading and writing are a process just like walking.

A strong connection between what your child learns in child care and at home helps strengthen learning.

Step by step.

First, your baby makes sounds, imitates your facial expressions, and learns to relate words to objects. Then you begin to notice your child pointing at and naming pictures in the books you read together. At first you hold the book for your baby, but soon your child is holding the book right side up and turning pages without help. This is the beginning of learning how to read and write—often called *early literacy*.

It's more than the ABCs.

Early literacy means much more than just reading and writing. It includes babbling, talking, recognizing letters and sounds and knowing what various pictures and signs mean. Early literacy is also scribbling, drawing pictures, memorizing and pretend-reading.

What about learning two languages?

Great! Young children are very good at learning more than one language.

A multi-lingual environment. Your child will learn two languages best if he or she knows that both languages are important and valued. Children also need to have lots of fun and meaningful chances to talk, read and pretend-write in both languages.

Your CCR&R may offer information about early literacy programs in your area. For help finding your local CCR&R, contact Child Care Aware®.

3

Check Out Your Child Care

Evaluate the early literacy activities and materials your child's caregiver offers. Use the *Early Literacy Child Care Checklist* below to help you.

For All Ages

- Does the caregiver have special training in early childhood education, First Aid and CPR?
- Has the caregiver been in the same program or provided care in the home for at least a year?
- Is one caregiver caring for just a few children (low adult to child ratio)?
- If there is more than one caregiver in the setting, is the number of children in the group still fairly small (group size)?
- If your child is in a child care center or family child care home, does the caregiver have a state license and a national accreditation (e.g., National Association for the Education of Young Children [NAEYC] or National Association for Family Child Care [NAFCC])?
- Does the caregiver welcome drop-in visits and parent ideas and involvement?
- Are there planned activities for children to do as well as lots of time for free play?
- Are materials such as books, blocks, toys and art supplies available to children all day long?
- Does the place look clean and safe, and is hand washing done often?
- Does the caregiver have written policies and procedures, including emergency plans?
- Does the caregiver have references?
- Have satisfactory criminal history background checks been conducted on each adult present?
- Has the program been inspected by the licensing agency within the last 12 months?

For Babies (Birth to One Year)

Does the caregiver. . .

- Hold, touch and make eye contact with babies often?
- Use words when responding to babies' crying?
- Talk about what is happening during routines, like "Let's wash our hands. Here's the soap."
- Read books with rhymes, name things and allow the babies to pat the pictures?
- Play games like peek-a-boo with babies?
- Sing to babies?

Are there. . .

- Board and soft books that show different cultures, physical abilities and types of families accessible for babies to reach, hold and look at most of the day?
- Times when music is played during the day?
- Rattles, squeak toys, and push and pull toys available to babies most of the day?
- Pictures of babies' families and a mirror so babies can see themselves?

For Toddlers (One and Two Year Olds)

In addition to the above, does the caregiver. . .

- Listen to, repeat and encourage toddlers' words?
- Do finger plays, rhyming and counting games?
- Let toddlers turn pages of board books, and ask toddlers to name pictures?
- Help toddlers pretend-play things like "going to the grocery store?"

Are there . . .

- Soft, cozy places for toddlers to read stories to themselves and their stuffed animals?
- Art supplies, like big crayons and paper, out for toddlers to use during the day?
- Puppets, play phones and dolls out for toddlers to use during the day?
- Toddlers' drawings, with their name written on it, hung up where they can see them?

Preschoolers (Three to Five Year Olds)

Does the caregiver. . .

- Read books with children every day, both one-on-one and in small groups so everyone can see?
- Give children time to look at books by themselves or with each other every day?
- Help children recognize letters in books and things they see all around them, like signs, calendars and directions?
- Help children sound out letters and words?
- Talk and listen to children throughout the day?
- Encourage children to talk with each other?
- Play games like "Simon Says" and "Mother May I?" with the children?
- Listen to children's stories and poems, and write them down for children?
- Give children chances to pretend-write things like diaries, recipes and shopping lists?
- Praise children for their efforts at pretend-writing, spelling and copying letters?

Are there. . .

- Various books and magazines about things like different families and cultures, animals, counting and the alphabet?
- Many things with print where children can see them, like labels on pictures and containers, signs and a big alphabet?
- Objects that add reading and writing into playtime, like a phone book, message pad and markers near a play phone, or a book about trucks or maps near play cars and trucks?
- Special areas for writing and drawing with things like books, paper, crayons, markers, and chalk and a chalk board?



4

Partner With Your Provider

Visiting and participating in events at child care sends a strong message. It tells your child and your child's caregiver that you think what your child is doing and learning is important.

5 simple things you can do:

- » Talk to your child's caregiver about the things listed on the Early Literacy Child Care Checklist, and work together on adding literacy materials and activities into your child's daily child care routine.
- » Visit your child at child care and read a book aloud.
- » Offer to go on a field trip to the local library.
- » Have parent-caregiver meetings regularly, and ask questions about what your child is talking about and reading.
- » Be there for your child's birthday party, and pick out family pictures with your child that you can label and share at the party.

5 easy after-work options:

- » Take a few minutes to talk with your child's caregiver at drop-off and pick-up times.
- » Share information about your child's latest favorite book or the new words your child is learning.
- » Send notes that can be read out loud with your child at child care—and ask your child's caregiver to help your child “write” notes back to you.
- » Help your child write names on pictures your child makes for your caregiver or another child at child care.
- » Talk with your child about what happened in child care every day.

5

Read, Repeat and Relax

What you do with your child at home will make the biggest difference in how ready your child is for reading and writing.

Again, please!

Children like to hear the same story repeatedly. So, have fun picking out a new picture or letter to talk about each time, or tell the story a little wrong so your child will say, "That's not what it says!"

Whether you are reading with your baby or preschooler, don't rush. Take time to read and talk about the book together.

Have fun with literacy. Read, talk, sing and play with your child—and don't worry! Young children learn at different rates. Your child will want to read and write if it is a fun and natural part of what you do each day.

Give praise freely. Encouraging your baby and young child during the early literacy stages gives your child the confidence to read and write later. Before you know it, your child will be reading aloud to you!

Get help with all your child care needs.

Your CCR&R agency can also help you with evaluating and finding child care, financial assistance and other resources.

**Call 1-800-424-2246 or visit
ChildCareAware.org to find the
CCR&R in your area.**

Child Care Aware® is committed to helping parents find the best information on locating quality child care and child care resources in their community. In partnership with Child Care Resource & Referral agencies (CCR&R), Child Care Aware® builds consumer awareness and supports families in making choices for the care and education of their children.



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For additional resources or help finding your local Child Care Resource & Referral agency (CCR&R), call:

1-800-424-2246

TTY Line: 1-866-278-9428

ChildCareAware.org

For local information contact:



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