

Ontario Early Years Child and Family Centre February
2017 Topic of the Month
Exploring Literacy

**Help your Child to Develop
Preschool Literacy Skills**



Studies have shown that reading, writing and oral language abilities develop together, beginning at birth and evolving gradually over time.

We can encourage this development by actively engaging our children while they are still young in interesting and meaningful reading and writing experiences. By learning preschool literacy skills long before they can actually read or write, our children are more likely to experience later success in reading and writing.

Make your child aware of the text around her and help her to interact with it.





How to Introduce Toddlers and Babies to Books

The first—and best—tip for sharing books with young children is to have fun together! If children are engaged and enjoying themselves, they are learning. When children have positive interactions with books, they are developing good feelings about reading, which will motivate them to continue seeking out books and other literacy materials as they grow.

Here are some other ideas for nurturing early literacy skills in your baby or toddler:

A Few Minutes at a Time is OK. Don't Worry if you don't Finish the Story.

Young children can only sit for a few minutes for a story, but as they grow, they will be able to sit longer. Let your child decide how much (or how little) time you spend reading, and remember you don't need to read every page. You may find that your child has a favorite page or even a favorite picture. She may want to linger there for a while; and then switch books or activities. Babies may just want to mouth the book, that's okay! When you let your child explore books in the ways that interest her, the reading experience will be more meaningful.

Talk or Sing About the Pictures.

You do not have to read the words to tell a story. Try “reading” the pictures in a book for your child sometime. When your child is old enough, ask him to read the pictures to you!

Let Children Turn the Pages

Babies cannot yet turn pages on their own, but an 18-month-old will want to give it a try, and a 3-year-old can certainly do it alone. Remember, it's OK to skip pages!

Show Children the Cover Page

Explain what the story is about. If you have an older toddler, ask them to guess what the story might be about.

Show Children the Words

Run your finger along the words as you read to them, from left to right.

Make the Story Come Alive

Create voices for the story characters and use your body to tell the story.

Make It Personal

Talk about your own family, pets, or community when you are reading about others in a story.

Ask Questions About the Story, and Let Children Ask Questions Too!

Use the story to have a back-and-forth conversation with your child. Talk about familiar activities and objects you see in the illustrations or read about in the story.

Let Children Tell The Story

Children as young as 3 years old can memorize a story, and many children love to be creative through storytelling.



The Impact of Toy Type on Interaction

<https://www.hanen.org/MyHanen/Resource-Centre/Articles/Research/The-Impact-of-Toy->

Have you noticed the latest trend in dining out with children? Lately, when I've been out to eat, I've observed many children with tablets at the dinner table. A friend of mine who has a two-year-old explained this to me, saying, "The only way I can get Charlie through a meal out is by letting him watch Thomas the Tank Engine." While distracting children with electronic devices can avoid some negative behaviours, it can also impact the amount of positive, high quality, interactions that are essential to children's early learning.

The researchers compared the five outcome measures in the three types of toy play. During play with electronic toys, there were fewer adult words, content-specific vocabulary, conversational turns, and parental responses compared to either traditional toy play or book reading. There were also fewer speech-like vocalizations during electronic toy play than during book reading. When comparing parental behaviours during traditional toy play and book reading, parents used fewer words and fewer content-specific words during toy play than they did when reading books.

The following table displays the average measures of each outcome over the three different play types:

Outcome Measure (Mean/Minute)	Activity		
	Electronic toys	Traditional toys	Books
Adult words	39.62	55.56	66.89
Content specific words	1.89	4.09	6.96
Child vocalizations	2.9	3.74	3.91
Conversational turns	1.64	2.49	2.73
Responses	1.31	2.09	2.18

This study adds to our knowledge of how electronics can negatively affect children's ability to learn from everyday interactions and gives us some concrete information to share with parents. The bottom line is: if a child is more focused on a toy than on his or her conversational partner, there will be fewer opportunities for interaction and language learning.

