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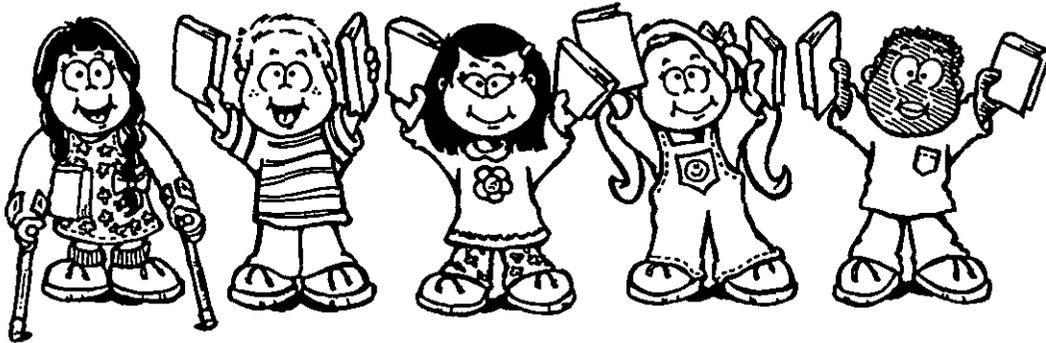
**0-3 Conference - Parenting Kit [2]**

AMERICA READS CHALLENGE

READY★SET★READ

FOR CAREGIVERS

Early Childhood Language Activities  
for Children from Birth through Age Five



A Joint Project of the Corporation for National Service,  
the U.S. Department of Education, and  
the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

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## Dear Caregiver:

Welcome to **READY★SET★READ**, an **AMERICA READS CHALLENGE** booklet that is filled with activities and ideas caregivers<sup>1</sup> can use every day to help young children learn about language. Children's language learning is rooted in the warm, loving environment of their homes and families. When caregivers work with families to support and build on the language skills children learn at home, children learn quickly. Most of the ideas in **READY★SET★READ** are simple to do, using materials found in your child care setting or at the library. These activities and ideas can be used with children as you play and do daily activities together.

The activities are presented for four age groups:

- **Young Babies** (Birth to 8 months)
- **Crawlers and Walkers** (8 to 18 months)
- **Toddlers** (18 to 36 months)
- **Preschoolers** (3 to 5 years)

The ideas for one age group may also work for a younger or older child. Using what you know about each child's skills and interests can help you decide which activities to use. You can read the section for one age group now and save the others for later.

Children learn about language when their caregivers:

- Offer interesting books and play materials that match the children's skills, interests, and cultures
- Read aloud to children every day
- Keep reading and writing materials where children can reach them on their own
- Show children how they use reading and writing to learn, have fun, and get jobs done
- Listen to children's ideas, answer their questions, and model how language is used

Parents are their children's first teachers, but caregivers play an essential role in supporting the work begun at home.

On the next page are some simple tips to help the children in your care learn about listening, speaking, reading, and writing. These basic, daily activities can make a difference in children's language growth.

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<sup>1</sup>In this booklet "caregivers" refers to family child care providers and the teachers, staff, and volunteers in child development programs.

## TIPS FOR CAREGIVERS FOR LANGUAGE LEARNING

- Talk with children as you play and do daily activities together.
- Read with children at a regular time every day and when they ask you.
- Take toddlers and preschoolers to the library so that they can choose books to read. Find out about your library's special books and services.
- Create a special place in your child care facility for reading and writing for toddlers and preschoolers.
- Keep books and other reading materials where children can reach them. Add new books as children's skills and interests change.
- Keep writing materials such as washable, nontoxic crayons and markers, paints and brushes, and different kinds of paper where children can reach them.
- Show children how you read and write every day to have fun and to get things done.
- Point out to children the printed words at child care and in the community.
- Encourage children to do things for themselves when they are ready. Let them feed and dress themselves, and clean up after themselves, even if these tasks take more time and are not done perfectly.

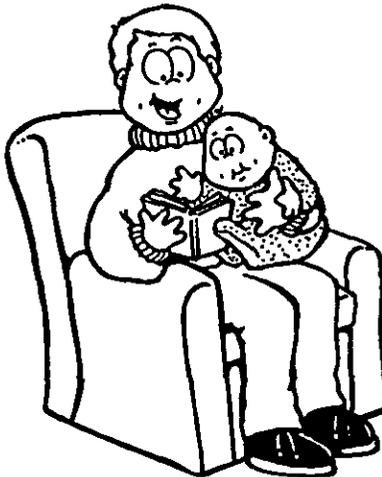
**GETTING TO KNOW YOU:**

**ACTIVITIES  
FOR  
YOUNG  
BABIES**

(Birth to 8 Months Old)

## WHAT DO YOUNG BABIES DO?

- Cry, make other sounds, and move their bodies.
- Listen and respond to the sounds and voices around them.
- Coo, gurgle, laugh, and babble to themselves and others.
- Enjoy listening to stories.
- Smile when people smile at them.
- Respond to their names.
- Take turns while singing and playing with another person.
- Pick up objects with their fingers and thumbs.
- Move objects from one hand to the other.



## HOW DO YOUNG BABIES LEARN?

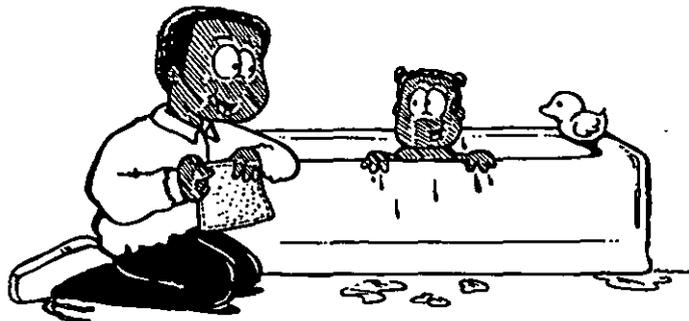
Katie is in the bathtub splashing in the water with both hands. Her father sits on the floor next to the tub making sure she is safe. "Katie, Katie," he says as he picks up a washcloth. "Are you ready to play our special game?"

Katie looks up and sees her father's smiling face. She smiles at him and laughs. He says, "Let's play Peek-a-Boo," and puts a washcloth in front of his face. Katie reaches out and pats the top of his head.

Her father says, "Peek-a-Boo, Katie, I can't see you." He lowers the washcloth so his eyes are no longer covered. Katie squeals with delight. He covers his eyes again and says, "Peek-a-Boo, Katie, I still can't see you."

Katie's father holds the washcloth out toward her, saying, "Your turn, Katie." She takes the washcloth from his hand and puts it in front of her face. Her father says, "Where's Katie?"

Katie drops the washcloth in the water and splashes with her hands. She babbles to her father, "Dadadada. Babababa." He says, "I think you're saying that you're tired of playing Peek-a-Boo. Let's play with your sponges."



### Like many young babies, Katie is learning about language:

- She knows that it's fun to play with another person.
- She looks up when her father says her name.
- She smiles when her father smiles at her.

### Katie's father helps her learn about language:

- He talks with her during a daily activity--bathtime.
- He says her name again and again so that she will learn to recognize it.
- He takes several turns in their game and then encourages her to take a turn.
- He responds to her babbles as if he knows what she is saying.

## ACTIVITIES AND IDEAS FOR YOUNG BABIES

AGE	ACTIVITIES
<b>YOUNG BABIES: BIRTH TO 8 MONTHS OLD</b>	<p><b>Listening and Talking</b></p> <p>Young babies enjoy being with other people.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Spend individual time talking with and responding to every baby many times during every day. Let babies know that you think that each one is special and fun to be with.</li> <li>• Learn to recognize the meaning of each baby's special cries and gestures. Organize your day so that you can quickly respond to babies' cries and provide what they seem to need-- a dry diaper, a hug, a warm bottle.</li> <li>• Introduce babies to taking turns, as they will do when they are older and begin talking with other people. Respond to their sounds and actions by smiling, making noises, or waving a stuffed animal in front of them. Play simple Peek-a-Boo games and sing songs. At first you will take many more turns than the babies do. As they get older, babies will take more turns by making happy noises and wiggling their bodies.</li> </ul> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 10px; margin: 10px auto; width: 80%; text-align: center;"> <p><b>How to help families:</b></p> <p>Always think of families as your partners in helping babies grow and learn. Keep families up-to-date on what their babies do at child care.</p> </div> <div style="text-align: center; margin-top: 20px;">  </div>

AGE	ACTIVITIES
<b>YOUNG BABIES: BIRTH TO 8 MONTHS OLD</b>	<p>Young babies coo and babble to themselves and others.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sing, coo, babble, smile, and laugh with babies during diapering, feeding, and play times. Let them know you notice them cooing and babbling to themselves. Respond to their sounds and actions. "You touched my nose, Carlos. Now I'm going to touch your nose."</li> <li>• Use your voice to make the sounds most babies love best-- talking, singing, and laughing. Sing and recite your own favorite songs and rhymes, and reserve a special song or rhyme for each baby.</li> <li>• Ask families to teach you the rhymes and traditional games their babies enjoy at home. Learn a few important words in the babies' home languages so you can comfort them as their families do.</li> </ul>

AGE	ACTIVITIES
<p><b>YOUNG BABIES: BIRTH TO 8 MONTHS OLD</b></p>	<p>Young babies listen to the sounds and voices around them.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Point out the sounds babies hear indoors and outdoors. "That was Inez banging the spoons together." "A train just went by."</li> <li>• Play different kinds of music and move with babies. Respond to the music's rhythm and beat. Sway gently, turn in circles, move the baby's arms and legs, or clap hands together. Talk about what you are doing.</li> <li>• Use babies' names when talking with them so that they will learn to recognize and respond to their own names. "Good morning, Kevin."</li> <li>• Give simple directions to babies by using words and gestures, and by varying the expression on your face. For example, a caregiver smiles and holds out her hand while saying, "Kendra, give me the bottle, please." When Kendra holds out the bottle, the caregiver takes it from her and says, "Thank you, Kendra. Let's put the bottle away now."</li> </ul> <div data-bbox="685 1102 1280 1542" data-label="Image"> </div>

AGE	ACTIVITIES
<p><b>YOUNG BABIES: BIRTH TO 8 MONTHS OLD</b></p>	<p><b>Reading</b></p> <p>Young babies like feeling close to special people such as their caregivers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make books part of your one-on-one times with babies. Hold babies in your lap while reading to them. Although they don't understand exactly what you are saying, babies love being close to you and listening to your voice. Over time, babies will associate these pleasant feelings with books and reading.</li> <li>• Respond to what babies want to do during reading times. Babies may grasp a cloth or plastic book and put it in their mouth. This is how they find out about books. Be sure to wash the book later, so that germs aren't passed from one baby to another. If a baby wiggles and squirms, stop reading; the baby is telling you it's time to do something else.</li> <li>• Point at pictures in books and name them. Encourage babies when they point at pictures on their own. "James, show me the ball. That's right. That's the ball." Let babies try to turn the pages by themselves.</li> </ul> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 10px; margin-top: 20px;"> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>How to help families:</b></p> <p>Encourage families to read to their babies at home. Tell them what their baby says and does when you read together at child care. Explain that many babies who are read to learn to love reading. Reading reminds children of the pleasant times they spent looking at books with a caring adult.</p> </div>

AGE	ACTIVITIES
<p><b>YOUNG BABIES: BIRTH TO 8 MONTHS OLD</b></p>	<p>Young babies can explore books on their own.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Display books with other toys where babies can reach them on their own. For example, place books on the blanket or carpeted area where babies play.</li> <li>• Look for books with simple, bright pictures against a solid background. Cloth and plastic books work well because they can be washed. Cardboard books are good for babies who are learning to turn pages.</li> <li>• Make a set of picture cards for the babies in your care. Look for simple pictures of familiar objects in magazines or catalogs. For example, a puppy, a sneaker, or a flower. Paste each picture on a piece of cardboard and cover with clear adhesive paper. Keep the pictures in an open container such as a plastic dishpan. Sit with babies and talk about the pictures.</li> </ul> <div data-bbox="680 981 1197 1436" data-label="Image"> <p>A black and white line drawing of a baby sitting on a patterned blanket on the floor. The baby is holding an open book and looking at it. The blanket has a simple geometric pattern. There are some small flowers or plants scattered around the blanket.</p> </div>

AGE	ACTIVITIES
<p><b>YOUNG BABIES: BIRTH TO 8 MONTHS OLD</b></p>	<p><b>Developing Muscles For Writing</b></p> <p>Young babies use their hands, fingers, and senses to learn.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offer a variety of safe play materials that babies can hold, shake, push, pull, lift, and hit. Babies tend to put everything in their mouths. Make sure their toys and play materials are washable and too large to be swallowed.</li> <li>• Babies often like household items just as much as expensive toys. Babies can use a set of plastic measuring cups in many ways. An assortment of textured fabrics give babies something to touch; you can talk about how each type of fabric feels.</li> <li>• Simple homemade toys also are fun for babies. Make cloth balls and sock puppets they can grasp and put in their mouths.</li> </ul> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 10px; margin-top: 10px;"> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>How to help families:</b></p> <p>Show families how to make safe play materials for babies with things they have at home. For example, they could make sock puppets, mobiles, or a textured blanket.</p> </div>

AGE	ACTIVITIES
<b>YOUNG BABIES: BIRTH TO 8 MONTHS OLD</b>	<p>Young babies are learning to do things for themselves.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Let babies pat, touch, then grasp their own bottles while you hold them. Babies can hold a diaper, pull off their socks, and raise their arms for you to remove a shirt.</li><li>• Show your excitement when a baby develops enough eye-hand coordination to reach out and grab something. "Emily, look at the mobile. You made it move. Can you make it move again?"</li><li>• Keep track of each baby's new skills so that you will know when to make changes to keep the baby safe. For example, when babies can grasp and pull on the mobile over the changing table, you will have to raise it and offer new toys that are safe.</li></ul> 

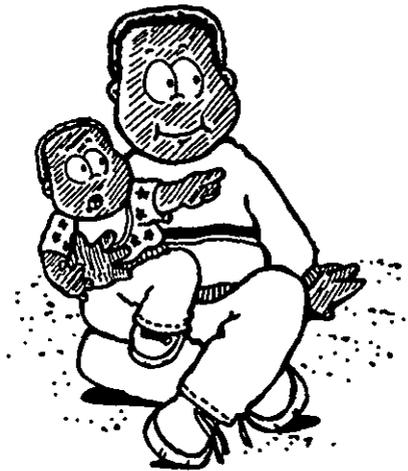
**ENJOYING OUR COMPANY:**

**ACTIVITIES  
FOR  
CRAWLERS AND WALKERS**

(8 to 18 Months Old)

## WHAT DO CRAWLERS AND WALKERS DO?

- Use sounds and gestures to say hello or get attention.
- Point at things they want.
- Say a few simple words.
- Like rhymes and simple songs.
- Enjoy reading with a favorite person.
- Turn the pages in sturdy cardboard books.
- Put objects such as nesting cups inside each other.
- Fill containers with water or small objects, then dump them out.
- Hold large crayons and make marks on paper.



## HOW DO CRAWLERS AND WALKERS LEARN?

Marcus picks up a book with cardboard pages and a duck on the cover. He puts the book in his mouth for a moment, then waves it in the air. Marcus looks at his big sister, Maria, and makes noises that sound a lot like words. Maria says, "Do you want to read? Bring the book to me. We can read together."

With book in hand, Marcus crawls to Maria. She lifts Marcus into her lap and holds the book so that he can see it. She points to the duck on the cover, "That's a duck. Let's see what's inside."



Marcus turns the page. He pats the picture and says something that sounds like words. "That's right," says Maria. "The baby is in the bathtub."

After looking at a few more pages, Marcus squirms and wiggles. "Okay," says Maria. "Have you read enough? Let me help you down." She puts Marcus on the floor and he crawls away.

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**Like many other crawlers and walkers, Marcus is learning about language:**

- He knows that people will respond to his sounds and actions.
- He thinks it's fun to look at books with another person.
- He knows how to wait for his turn while talking and reading with his sister.

**Marcus's sister, Maria, helps him learn about language:**

- She responds to his sounds and actions as if he were saying words.
- She lets him turn the pages of the book.
- She talks to him about what he seems to be saying.
- She lets him find something else to do when he's lost interest in reading.

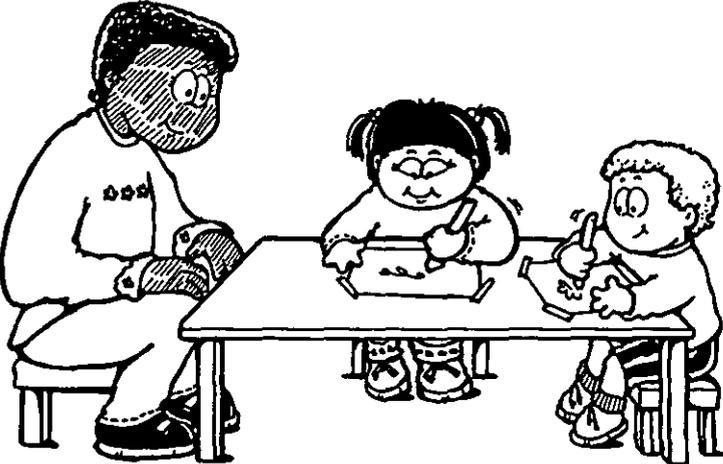
## ACTIVITIES AND IDEAS FOR CRAWLERS AND WALKERS

AGE	ACTIVITIES
<p><b>CRAWLERS AND WALKERS: 8 TO 18 MONTHS OLD</b></p>	<p><b>Listening and Talking</b></p> <p>Crawlers and walkers are learning that it's fun to be with other people.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Play games with babies that allow them to take turns—the way people do when talking with each other. You can roll a ball back and forth, play Peek-a-Boo by hiding something under a blanket or behind your back, and imitate babies' babbles. "You made a new sound, 'aba aba aba'."</li> <li>• Set the stage for a familiar game, then wait until the baby shows interest in playing. For example, take out the blanket and toy you use for Peek-a-Boo and sit down on the floor where you and the baby usually play together. Wait patiently until the baby starts the game by covering the toy with the blanket. Then take your turn. "Michael. Where's the bunny? Where did the bunny go?"</li> <li>• Encourage babies to notice each other and what they are doing. "Nina is holding her bottle while I hold her. You can touch her gently. Look, she smiled at you."</li> <li>• Play a game, sing a song, or read a book with two babies at once. They will enjoy being with you and with each other. "Jonathan, here comes the ball. You caught it. Now roll it to me. Sara, here comes the ball. Good catch, Sara. Now roll it to me."</li> </ul> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 10px; margin-top: 10px; text-align: center;"> <p><b>How to help families:</b></p> <p>Tell families about the games their babies play at child care and ask them to tell you about the games babies play at home. Try some of their ideas, and encourage them to try some of yours.</p> </div>

AGE	ACTIVITIES
<p><b>CRAWLERS AND WALKERS: 8 TO 18 MONTHS OLD</b></p>	<p>Crawlers and walkers use sounds, words, and gestures to express themselves.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pay close attention to babies' babbles, words, and actions so that you can understand what they are saying. "Lena, I see you pointing to the bear. Do you want me to get it for you?" Be patient. It may take several tries before you understand what a baby is saying. "Oh, Lena wants her blanket, not the bear. Here it is."</li> <li>• Show your excitement when babies begin to talk. Help families keep track of these first words. Provide the names for objects, actions, and feelings. "Truck. Garrett is pushing the truck. Garrett is happy."</li> <li>• Get to know what babies mean when they say a word. Many babies use the same word to send different messages, changing their tone of voice, facial expressions, and gestures. Watch and listen, then respond to what you think the baby is saying. For example: <p style="margin-left: 40px;">Cara looks up, points to the sky, and says, "Up." Her caregiver looks up and sees a kite flying in the distance. He says to Cara, "That's a kite. It's UP in the sky." Cara laughs and says again, "Up."</p> </li> </ul> 

AGE	ACTIVITIES
<p><b>CRAWLERS AND WALKERS: 8 TO 18 MONTHS OLD</b></p>	<p><b>Reading</b></p> <p>Crawlers and walkers like being read to.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read babies' favorite books again and again. Doing this helps babies remember the pictures and words. They are comforted by familiar activities such as this. Babies enjoy joining in by naming the pictures on a page.</li> <li>• Read when a baby asks you to. Let the baby pick the book, time, and place for reading. Go to the next page when the baby is ready, and read for as long as he or she is interested.</li> <li>• Read books in English and in the babies' home language. Ask families to tell you about books their babies read at home. Visit the children's room at the library and ask the librarian about books in babies' home languages.</li> <li>• Point to or touch the objects in the pictures and name them. Relate the objects and activities in books to the babies' lives. "That baby has a high chair like yours. That's a ball. Jimmy likes to play with our ball."</li> </ul> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 10px; margin: 10px 0;"> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>How to help families:</b></p> <p>Ask families what their babies like to do at home and elsewhere. Look for books about objects and activities that are familiar to babies. For example, if a baby likes going to the park, look for a book with simple pictures of outdoor scenes.</p> </div> <p>Crawlers and walkers like to look at books on their own.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide books with thick cardboard pages that are easy to turn and hard to damage. When the books get torn, put them away until they can be repaired and returned to the shelf. When babies damage books beyond repair, order new copies.</li> </ul>

AGE	ACTIVITIES
<p><b>CRAWLERS AND WALKERS: 8 TO 18 MONTHS OLD</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make it easy for babies to choose the books they want to explore. Store books with covers face up in open baskets on the low shelves used for other toys and play materials. Have babies help put books and toys away several times a day.</li> <li>• Look for books about everyday activities—taking a bath, going for a walk, eating breakfast. Make sure the books show children's cultures, ethnic groups, family life, and abilities in positive ways.</li> <li>• Make books that tell stories about the babies in your care. If you have a computer you can use it for the words and pictures. If not, print the words by hand and use photographs, pictures cut from magazines, or simple drawings as illustrations. Cover cardboard pages with clear plastic and bind with cotton string or yarn. Write new books throughout the year.</li> </ul> <div style="text-align: center;">  </div>

AGE	ACTIVITIES
CRAWLERS AND WALKERS: 8 TO 18 MONTHS OLD	<p data-bbox="483 348 942 385">Developing Muscles For Writing</p> <p data-bbox="483 414 1362 451">Crawlers and walkers can hold and use fat crayons to scribble.</p> <ul data-bbox="483 480 1396 895" style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="483 480 1396 672">• Introduce crayons and paper to babies. Begin by showing them how to use crayons to make marks on large pieces of paper. Tape the paper to the table so that it will stay flat. If babies try to color on walls, floors, and tables, gently redirect them back to the paper. They will soon learn that crayons and paper go together.</li><li data-bbox="483 702 1396 895">• Sit with babies while they scribble, to help and show your interest in their efforts and accomplishments. "Azim, look what you did. You made those marks on the paper." Allow babies to decide when they are finished. Then put away the crayons and paper. Bring them out later for another scribbling session.</li></ul> 

**TALKING ABOUT ME:**

**ACTIVITIES  
FOR  
TODDLERS**

**(18 to 36 Months Old)**

## WHAT DO TODDLERS DO?

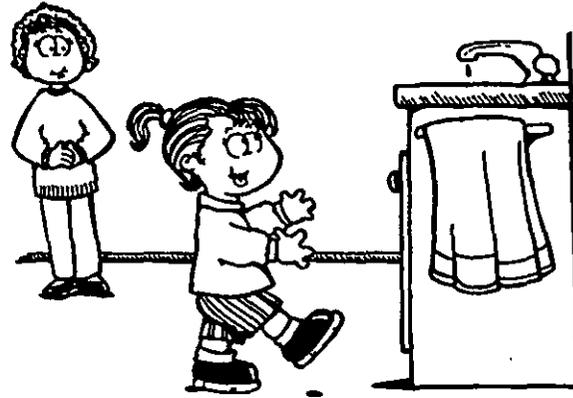
- Learn new words every day.
- Speak using groups of words ("Ned go out").
- Take turns while talking with people.
- Ask many questions ("What that?").
- Name objects in picture books ("Ball").
- Follow two-part directions ("Pick up the socks and put them in the basket.").
- Say "no" and "not."
- Copy adult voices and actions.
- Follow simple stories.
- Look at books on their own.
- Join in when a book has rhymes and repeated words.
- Scribble with crayons and washable markers.



## HOW DO TODDLERS LEARN?

Rosa tugs on Ms. Vega's arm and says, "Wet." Ms. Vega says, "Your diaper is wet. Let's go change it."

Rosa lies down on the changing table. Ms. Vega washes her hands and tells Rosa what she is doing. "I'm washing away all the germs so you will stay healthy. I'm taking off your shorts. They're red, like your sneakers." Rosa says, "Red sneakers."



Ms. Vega takes a diaper from the shelf. She replaces Rosa's wet diaper with a dry one. "All done," says Ms. Vega. "Wash hands?" asks Rosa. "Yes," says Ms. Vega, "let's wash our hands." "Wash hands," says Rosa.

Rosa heads for the sink, singing. "This way, wash hands, wash hands, wash hands." Ms. Vega sings along, then says, "Rosa, you learned a new song to sing." "Sing song," says Rosa.

### Like many toddlers, Rosa is learning about language:

- She communicates her needs using groups of words.
- She repeats words she hears adults speak.
- She learns a simple song.
- She asks questions.
- She answers questions.

### Rosa's caregiver helps her learn about language:

- She responds to Rosa's request by answering with a group of words.
- She describes what she is doing and names a color--red.
- She asks a simple question that Rosa knows how to answer.
- She sings with Rosa, then congratulates her on learning the song.

## ACTIVITIES AND IDEAS FOR TODDLERS

AGE	ACTIVITIES
<b>TODDLERS: 18 TO 36 MONTHS OLD</b>	<p><b>Listening and Talking</b></p> <p>Toddlers are beginning to enjoy make-believe play.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have plenty of telephones (toys and real ones) on hand. Look for push-button and portable phones like the ones toddlers see at home. Help toddlers talk on the phone to a friend or family member.           <p style="margin-left: 40px;">"You seem a little sad today, Jenny. Would you like to call your Mom? Okay, let's call her. Mrs. Trent, here's Jenny. She wants to say 'hello'."</p> </li> <li>• Provide dress-up clothes and props--hats, scarves, shoes, keys, tote bags, and pocketbooks. Most toddlers like to dress up, pack a bag, and pretend to leave and come back. They play house with pots, pans, dishes, and other household items.</li> <li>• Join toddlers in their make-believe play to introduce new words and to encourage them to talk.           <p style="margin-left: 40px;">"That smells delicious. What are you cooking?" "Are you going to work? Say 'hello' to your Dad for me."</p> </li> </ul> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 10px; margin-top: 10px; text-align: center;"> <p><b>How to help families:</b></p> <p>Invite families to share traditional songs and rhymes from their culture. Make an audiotape of the toddlers singing a song or saying a rhyme to share with families. Play the tape during drop-off and pick-up times, and lend it to families who are interested.</p> </div>

AGE	ACTIVITIES
TODDLERS: 18 TO 36 MONTHS OLD	<p>Toddlers are learning to play with each other.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Invite two to four toddlers to do something together. You can sing a song, do a fingerplay, talk to puppets, or play a silly word game about opposites.  "Do plates go <i>on</i> the table or <i>under</i> the table?" "Are elephants <i>big</i> or <i>little</i>?"</li><li>• Move on to another activity when toddlers lose interest. As toddlers' attention spans grow, slowly increase the time for very small group activities.</li></ul> 

AGE	ACTIVITIES						
<p>TODDLERS: 18 TO 36 MONTHS OLD</p>	<p>Toddlers ask a lot of questions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> <p>Answer toddlers' many questions. Try a simple answer first. If that's not enough, try again. Toddlers may ask more questions because they don't understand the answer or because they like asking questions.</p> <table border="0" data-bbox="638 574 1411 712"> <tr> <td>"Where's my banana?"</td> <td>"You ate your banana."</td> </tr> <tr> <td>"Where did it go?"</td> <td>"It's in your tummy."</td> </tr> <tr> <td>"Why?"</td> <td>"Because you chewed and swallowed it."</td> </tr> </table> </li> <li> <p>Be patient. Toddlers ask many, many questions because they are trying to learn as much as they can about the world. They come to you because they know you can help them learn.</p> </li> </ul> 	"Where's my banana?"	"You ate your banana."	"Where did it go?"	"It's in your tummy."	"Why?"	"Because you chewed and swallowed it."
"Where's my banana?"	"You ate your banana."						
"Where did it go?"	"It's in your tummy."						
"Why?"	"Because you chewed and swallowed it."						

AGE	ACTIVITIES
<p>TODDLERS: 18 TO 36 MONTHS OLD</p>	<p>Toddlers like talking to people who will listen to their stories.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Let toddlers know that they have interesting things to say. Comment on what a toddler is doing, ask a question that encourages the child to talk, or join in the play and talk about what you are doing together. <p style="text-align: center;">"Mia, our soap bubbles are floating in the air."</p> </li> <li>Talk during activities, such as when eating, washing hands, and picking up toys. Learn some words and phrases in a toddler's home language. <p style="text-align: center;">"Este pollo es muy bueno."</p> </li> <li>Listen to a toddler for as long as it takes the child to tell a story. Ask questions to help the child explain what happened.</li> </ul> 

AGE	ACTIVITIES
<b>TODDLERS: 18 TO 36 MONTHS OLD</b>	<p data-bbox="443 314 561 348"><b>Reading</b></p> <p data-bbox="443 385 813 419">Toddlers like being read to.</p> <ul data-bbox="443 449 1429 1017" style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="443 449 1429 604">• Read toddlers' favorite books in English and their home languages, if possible. Toddlers like to hear the same book again and again. After they memorize some of the story, they can join in and tell what happens next. Later, they may want to retell the story on their own.</li> <li data-bbox="443 640 1429 761">• Read to toddlers in very small groups. Make sure everyone can see the pictures in the book. Look for big book versions of toddlers' favorites. Let toddlers decide when they wish to leave the group, but continue reading to the toddlers who are still interested.</li> <li data-bbox="443 798 1429 859">• Read to toddlers one-on-one. Choose a story that's just right for a toddler in your care.</li> <li data-bbox="443 895 1429 1017">• Read when a toddler asks you. Read when you think an active toddler needs some quiet time. Read indoors and outdoors, at the beginning and end of the day, and whenever you can take time to give a toddler your special attention.</li> </ul> <div data-bbox="475 1081 1401 1257" style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-top: 20px;"> <p data-bbox="813 1098 1065 1132" style="text-align: center;"><b>How to help families:</b></p> <p data-bbox="492 1157 1367 1242">Tell families about the books, materials, and services available at their local library. Encourage them to visit the library often to find books that are just right for their toddlers.</p> </div>

AGE	ACTIVITIES
<p>TODDLERS: 18 TO 36 MONTHS OLD</p>	<p>Toddlers are gradually learning about books and reading.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Point to the words as you read to toddlers, so that they will begin to understand that you are reading the words, not the pictures. They probably won't fully understand this until they are older.</li> <li>• Describe the pictures. Point out details the toddlers might have missed. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>"He is missing a button. See how his strap hangs down?"</li> <li>"The daddy is kissing the baby because he loves him so much."</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Help toddlers understand and talk about a story. Ask questions to help them connect the story to their own lives. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>"What did you do when you were a baby?"</li> <li>"How do you help your Dad get ready for dinner?"</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Extend older toddlers' enjoyment of a popular story by putting out new props or leading a simple activity. For example, after reading stories about baby animals, put a basket of farm animals next to the blocks. After reading stories about caterpillars, ask the children to wiggle like caterpillars, then fly like butterflies.</li> </ul> <div data-bbox="550 1251 1314 1598" data-label="Image"> </div>

AGE	ACTIVITIES
<p><b>TODDLERS: 18 TO 36 MONTHS OLD</b></p>	<p><b>Building Muscles For Writing</b></p> <p>Toddlers can use their hands and fingers to play with toys and to do many things for themselves.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keep toys on low, open shelves so that toddlers can choose what they want to play with and put things away when done. Put things that are used together near each other. For example, put crayons on the same shelf as the paper.</li> <li>• Encourage toddlers to help take care of their toys and to keep the child care setting tidy. Have several clean-up times each day. Provide toddler-size cleaning tools, such as small brooms and dust-pans.</li> <li>• Follow a schedule that gives toddlers plenty of time to take part in routines such as eating, handwashing, and getting ready to go outdoors. Make it easy for toddlers to do things without your help: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Place cubbies and coat hooks at toddlers' height and show them how to hang up their coats.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Provide cups and eating utensils small enough to fit in toddlers' hands.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Mark each toothbrush with a special symbol—a star, an X, a dot—so children can know which toothbrush is theirs.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Place tissues and paper towels where toddlers can reach them.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Provide an assortment of table toys and materials that encourage toddlers to use their hands and fingers, such as pegs to place in pegboards and blocks to stack and then knock down. These items must be large enough so that toddlers won't choke on them.</li> <li>• Offer new materials as toddlers' skills improve. Older toddlers can build eye-hand coordination while doing puzzles with more pieces and while fitting small blocks together. They may be ready to use a sifter in the sand box and small boats at a water play table.</li> </ul>

AGE	ACTIVITIES
<p><b>TODDLERS: 18 TO 36 MONTHS OLD</b></p>	<div data-bbox="475 336 1390 540" style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 10px; margin-bottom: 10px;"> <p style="text-align: center;">How to help families:</p> <p>Take photographs of toddlers cleaning up, washing their hands, and putting on their coats, and post them on a bulletin board near the door so that families can see their toddlers being independent. Ask families to tell you what their toddlers can do on their own at home.</p> </div> <p>Toddlers can use a variety of drawing and writing tools.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide many things to draw and write with and on. Store crayons, washable markers, and chalk where toddlers can get them without help from an adult. Large paper is best for toddlers' drawing and writing because toddlers need space to make wide movements with their arms. For variety, toddlers can draw and write on chalkboards and on the sidewalk.</li> <li>• Set up easels, washable paint in a few colors, and brushes with short handles and wide bristles for toddlers to use every day.</li> <li>• Encourage toddlers to use their fingers to make wavy lines and circles with fingerpaint on trays or a plastic tablecloth.</li> </ul> <div data-bbox="640 1038 1219 1400" style="text-align: center;"> </div> <p>Toddlers are beginning to notice letters and writing.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduce letters in a casual way. Provide some alphabet blocks, puzzles, stamps, and magnets for toddlers to play with.</li> <li>• Let toddlers see you writing. Sit down with a toddler while making a shopping list, talk about the sign you are making, and explain what's in the note you are sending home to families. Toddlers are likely to copy your writing in the same way they copy other adult activities.</li> </ul>

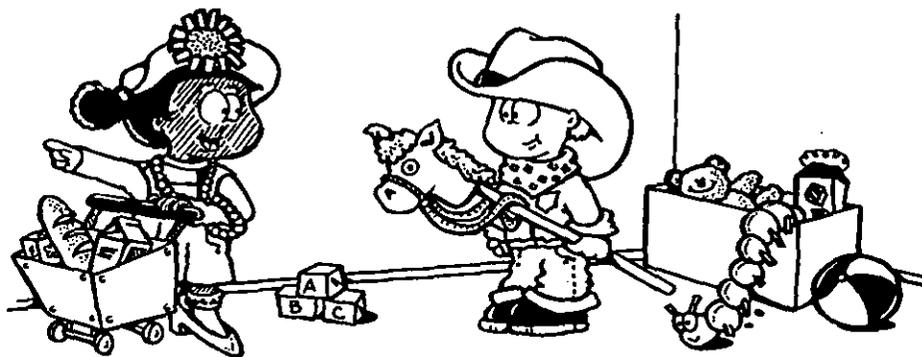
**USING LANGUAGE TO LEARN:**

**ACTIVITIES  
FOR  
PRESCHOOLERS**

**(3 to 5 Years Old)**

## WHAT DO PRESCHOOLERS DO?

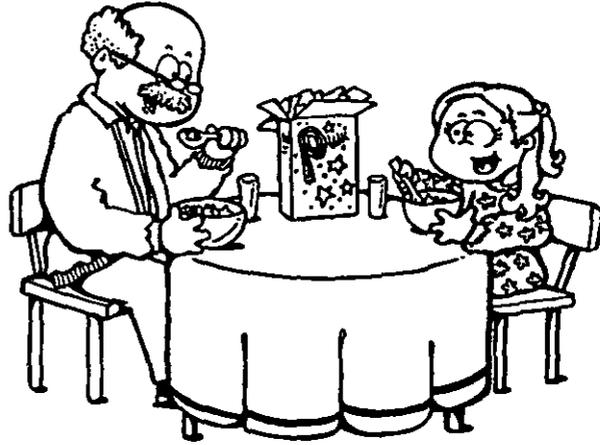
- Listen to stories and to conversations.
- Talk to adults and other children in complex sentences.
- Master many rules of grammar.
- Make up silly words and stories.
- Use language to think, to share ideas and feelings, and to learn new things.
- Enjoy the same books over and over and look at new books.
- Retell familiar stories to themselves and others.
- Think about what the characters in a book might feel or do.
- Draw and write with pencils, crayons, and markers.
- See print around them and watch adults read and write.
- Imitate adult writing by scribble writing.
- Copy shapes and some letters.



## HOW DO PRESCHOOLERS LEARN?

Gina bounces out of bed and hurries to the kitchen. She opens the cabinet, takes out a box of cereal, then puts it back. She takes out another box and says, "Grandpa, this is my cereal. It has a big 'P' and lots of stars."

Grandpa says, "That's good thinking." Gina points to a letter on the box, "That's a 'P.'" She traces the letter in the air and says, " 'P' as in Peter. Peter's name starts with a 'P'. It's on his cubby."



Grandpa makes an offer. "Today, we can have our regular story time and then write together. I need to write a letter to a friend. You can write, too."

Gina puts her empty bowl in the sink and runs to find her mother. "Mom, I'm gonna read and write with Grandpa." Her mother says, "That sounds like fun. When I take you to family child care, I'll tell Ms. Jenkins that you like to write. You can write at her house and at home."

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### Like many preschoolers, Gina is learning language:

- She knows that letters (the P) and pictures (the stars) have meaning.
- She knows there is a 'P' on her cereal box and at the beginning of Peter's name.
- She knows that people take turns when talking to each other.

### Gina's family helps her learn about language:

- They have a regular story time every day.
- Grandpa encourages her thinking, so Gina continues exploring the letters on the box.
- Grandpa offers to write with Gina.
- Mom talks to Ms. Jenkins, so that Gina can write at family child care and at home.

## ACTIVITIES AND IDEAS FOR PRESCHOOLERS

AGE	ACTIVITIES
<p><b>PRESCHOOLERS: 3 TO 5 YEARS OLD</b></p>	<p><b>Listening and Talking</b></p> <p>Preschoolers listen and talk as they use materials and take part in activities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offer books without words so that children can make up their own stories to go with the pictures.</li> <li>• Record books on tape and place them with the tape player. Include blank tapes so that children can make their own recordings.</li> <li>• Teach children nonsense rhymes, songs, poems, and chants. Ask families to help you learn songs, poems, and stories in the children's home languages.</li> <li>• Make up songs and stories about the children in the group and include their names in familiar songs and finger plays.</li> <li>• Invite children to tell their favorite stories in their own words or to recall a real event. After the story they can act out stories with each other.</li> </ul> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 10px; margin: 10px auto; width: 80%; text-align: center;"> <p><b>How to help families:</b></p> <p>Ask families to help you collect dress-up clothes and props for the children's dramatic play. This is a good way to provide materials that represent children's families and cultures.</p> </div> <p>Preschoolers talk, invent stories, and use their imaginations during make-believe play.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide puppets, dress-up clothes, and accessories for make-believe play. Include items children can use to explore play themes such as a gas station, grocery store, or restaurant.</li> </ul>

AGE	ACTIVITIES
<p><b>PRESCHOOLERS: 3 TO 5 YEARS OLD</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offer children a new idea for their play by asking a question. "Does this restaurant serve chili? I'd really like a nice big bowl of chili."</li> <li>• Suggest a role for a quiet child who may have difficulty getting involved in make-believe play. "I see two people waiting on tables in this restaurant. Do you have a cook?"</li> </ul> <div data-bbox="674 580 1252 981" data-label="Image"> </div> <p>Preschoolers can express their ideas and listen and respond to other people.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Start conversations with children and keep them going. Watch what a child is doing, then comment or add new information. For example, Monte is looking at the bean plants the children planted last month. To start a conversation, his teacher could say: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>"I grew butter beans in my garden last year."</li> </ul> <p>Wait for the child to respond. It may take a while for her to absorb what you said and think of a reply. If the child doesn't respond, try again.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>"What kind of beans do you like to eat?"</li> </ul> <p>If the child does respond, try to find out what he or she wants to talk about and say something about the child's interests.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>"There sure are a lot of different beans--black beans, string beans, pinto beans. We have a book about beans. Let's see what it says."</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

AGE	ACTIVITIES
<p><b>PRESCHOOLERS: 3 TO 5 YEARS OLD</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Talk with children during outdoor play, while painting or drawing, at meals and snacks, or while putting away toys. Here are some tips: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ Listen carefully. Smile and nod to show your interest.</li> <li>❑ Help a child add missing information to a confusing story. "Did Rex jump over the fence or was the gate open?"</li> <li>❑ Comment or ask a question to help a child continue: "Rex must be a good jumper." "How did you get Rex to come home?"</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <div data-bbox="697 798 1230 1223" data-label="Image"> </div> <p>Preschoolers are learning how to talk with each other.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Help children learn to talk with each other in small groups. Remind children to listen to the speaker. <p style="margin-left: 40px;">"Tory is talking now, Carlos. Tory, tell us about cooking with your Dad."</p> <p style="margin-left: 40px;">"Carlos, we enjoyed your story about going to the barber shop with your uncle. Now it's Drew's turn to talk. Drew, what did you do over the weekend?"</p> </li> <li>• Sit with children during mealtimes and help them learn to take turns talking and listening, to stay on the topic, and to keep their conversation going.</li> </ul>

AGE	ACTIVITIES
<p><b>PRESCHOOLERS: 3 TO 5 YEARS OLD</b></p>	<p><b>Reading</b></p> <p>Preschoolers like being read to.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read to small groups at story times. Make sure the children are comfortable. Show the cover of the book you will read and introduce the characters. Tell a little bit about the story. Hold the book so that the children can see the pictures. Make faces and change your voice to bring the characters to life. Stop and talk about what the pictures show and what might happen next. Discuss what the characters are doing and how they might be feeling. Ask and answer questions.</li> <li>• Read to one or two children at a time when they make a request or when you want to share a book that's just right for a particular child. Use these read-aloud sessions to encourage children to talk about the story and the characters and to share their own ideas.</li> <li>• Learn about your library's services for young children. Ask about bilingual story times, special story hours for child care programs, and workshops for caregivers. Sometimes librarians can visit child care programs to discuss books and ideas.</li> <li>• Pass along to families the library's fliers and brochures, book lists, and information about parenting resources.</li> </ul> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 10px; margin: 10px 0;"> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>How to help families:</b></p> <p>Support family reading times by allowing children to borrow books overnight or for a few days. Sign up for programs that provide free or inexpensive books and reading materials. Sponsor a new or used book fair. Learn about family literacy programs in your community. Sponsor a workshop on reading with children.</p> </div> <p>Preschoolers like to look at books on their own.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create a colorful, well-lit, carpeted library area with soft chairs or pillows. Place books, magazines, and other reading materials with covers face up on low shelves or a rack so children can see them. Decorate the area with book posters and displays about favorite books. Offer a flannel board, puppets or other materials for acting out stories.</li> </ul>

AGE	ACTIVITIES
<p><b>PRESCHOOLERS: 3 TO 5 YEARS OLD</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read and show books to the children about their current interests, for example, books on bridges and tunnels for block building, cookbooks with snack recipes, and a nature guide to look up leaves collected on a walk.</li> <li>• Encourage reading in all rooms and areas used by children. Create places for a child to read alone or with a friend, such as a beanbag chair under a loft, a large cardboard box, a pile of pillows in a quiet corner, or a blanket under a shady tree.</li> </ul> <div style="text-align: center;">  </div> <p>Preschoolers like books about familiar characters, scenes, and events.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Select books that match children's ages and developmental stages that show their cultures, ethnic group, families, and abilities. Look for books that respond to a child's special interest (space travel), or a recent experience (going to the zoo), or that help the child adjust to a change (moving to a new home).</li> <li>• Provide five to eight books per child—some in their home languages and some in English. Include a wide variety of books. Offer books with rhymes, repetition, and predictable events; nonsense and fantasy books; storybooks about everyday life; books about new ideas; poetry; alphabet and counting books; simple dictionaries (English and home languages); and easy-readers (for older preschoolers who are ready for them).</li> </ul>

AGE	ACTIVITIES
<p><b>PRESCHOOLERS: 3 TO 5 YEARS OLD</b></p>	<p><b>Writing</b></p> <p>Preschoolers do scribble writing and copy shapes, letters, and words.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage children to develop the small muscles used for writing. They can cut, paste, draw, paint, thread beads on a lace, roll play dough, connect small blocks, use a keyboard, play a drum, spread peanut butter on a cracker, zip a coat, and serve peas with a large spoon.</li> <li>• Set up a special place where children can practice writing. Provide a table and chairs and low, open shelves filled with lined and unlined paper, writing tools, junk mail and catalogs, office supplies, a typewriter, and other items to encourage children's make-believe play.</li> <li>• Include a few ready-made blank books (e.g., 10 pieces of paper folded in half and stapled on the fold) for children's use. Provide binding supplies such as cardboard for covers, a hole punch, string, or a stapler.</li> <li>• Include opportunities for writing as a part of children's play. Offer writing materials and props for real workplaces—a restaurant, store, health clinic, or travel agency. Children can write menus, sales receipts, prescriptions, and tickets.</li> <li>• Put paper and markers near blocks so that children can make signs or labels for their block buildings.</li> </ul> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 10px; margin-top: 20px;"> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>How to help families:</b></p> <p>Make sure every child has writing materials to use at home. Share donations of paper and crayons or markers with families. If necessary, include money in the budget to purchase writing materials for children to use at home.</p> </div>

AGE	ACTIVITIES
<p><b>PRESCHOOLERS: 3 TO 5 YEARS OLD</b></p>	<p>Preschoolers are learning how writing is used.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Let children see how print is used to send messages and to provide information. Label shelves and containers to show where materials are kept. Put names, pictures, or symbols on children's cubbies.</li> <li>• Use print in English and children's home languages. Ask families to help you with the home languages if necessary.</li> <li>• Hang up written and picture versions of the daily schedule. Make a helper chart. Use signs to show how many children can use an area at a time.</li> <li>• Make step-by-step recipe cards that tell children what to do during a cooking activity.</li> <li>• Read aloud the photo caption for an interesting magazine or newspaper article. Tell the children what the article is about. Show them an unusual or funny picture and ask them to think of a title for the picture. Write down their titles, then post them on the bulletin board with the picture.</li> </ul> 

AGE	ACTIVITIES
<b>PRESCHOOLERS: 3 TO 5 YEARS OLD</b>	<p>Preschoolers are learning how spoken and written words are connected.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ask children to help you make signs that provide information, such as when to water the plants. On one side write, "Please water us." On the other write, "Thank you for watering us."</li><li>• Put children's spoken words in writing. Ask children to tell you about their artwork. With their permission, write their descriptions at the bottom or on the back of the picture.</li><li>• Ask questions to help children talk about an interesting experience they had together or special times they had with their families. Put their comments on a large sheet of paper. Hang the finished story where children and families can see it.</li></ul> 

# Reading and Writing Play Materials

Children learn about reading and writing in several ways. They watch adults, try out their own ideas, solve problems, and figure out for themselves how spoken and written words are connected.

Families can help by providing a special place where children can read and write and by encouraging them to include reading and writing in their play activities. Here are some examples of reading and writing materials for young children.

## Create a Special Place With:

- Table (homemade or purchased, sized for young children)
- Chair(s)
- Desk and chair
- Low, open shelves
- Bulletin board
- Clothesline and clothespins (to hang up children's writing)

## Explore Letters and Numerals With:

- Magnet boards and alphabet and number magnets
- Alphabet and numeral blocks, tiles, and puzzles
- Alphabet and numeral sponges, stamps, and stamp pads
- Alphabet and counting books

## Play Make-Believe With:

- Clipboards
- Envelopes
- Junk mail, catalogs, coupons
- Magazines
- Empty food containers
- File folders and boxes
- Mailbag and mailbox

## Write With and On:

- Chalkboards (wall and lap)
- Chalk (white and colored)
- Easels
- Paint
- Brushes
- Paper (lined and unlined, different sizes, colors, weights, textures)
- Markers (washable, nontoxic, thick and thin tips)
- Crayons
- Colored pencils
- Erasable boards, markers, and erasers
- Magic slates
- Ready-made blank books
- Bookbinding materials (stapler, hole punch, laces)
- Scissors (for older toddlers and preschoolers)
- Typewriter
- Computer and developmentally appropriate writing programs

# American Library Association's *Suggested Book List for Young Readers*

This *Recommended Book List for Young Readers* provides suggestions for books that you can introduce to children at different ages.<sup>2</sup> Although some of these books have been developed for a particular age, many are old favorites that can be enjoyed at any age.

## **BIRTH THROUGH EIGHT MONTHS**

The following books have simple rhymes and poems.

**Big Fat Hen**, by Keith Baker

**Ten, Nine, Eight**, by Molly Bang

**Play Rhymes**, by Marc Brown

**Goodnight Moon**, by Margaret Wise Brown

**Tomie DePaola's Mother Goose**, by Tomie DePaola

**Eye Winker, Tom Tinker, Chin Chopper: 50 Musical Finger Plays**, by Tom Glazer

**Rosie's Walk**, by Pat Hutchins

**Read Aloud Rhymes for the Very Young**, by Jack Prelutsky

**Have You Seen My Duckling?**, by Nancy Tafuri

**My First Mother Goose**, by Rosemary Wells

## **EIGHT MONTHS THROUGH EIGHTEEN MONTHS**

These books are short with a little text and many rhymes. At this age children really enjoy holding cardboard books and turning pages.

**Moon Bear**, by Frank Asch

**Will I Have a Friend?**, by Miriam Cohen

**Condoroy**, by Don Freeman

**Where's Spot?**, by Eric Hill

**Mama, Do You Love Me?**, by Barbara Joose

**Peter's Chair**, by Ezra Jack Keats

**Pat the Bunny**, by Dorothy Kunhardt

**Clap Hands**, by Helen Oxenbury

**Seven Blind Mice**, by Ed Young

**"More, More, More", Said the Baby**, by Vera Williams

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<sup>2</sup> The U.S. Department of Education does not endorse particular books and recommends that parents review this list and make their own decision on the suitability of the books for their children.

## **EIGHTEEN THROUGH THIRTY-SIX MONTHS**

These books have more text and an easy-to-follow story that moves along quickly.

**The Little Red Hen**, by Bryon Barton

**Clifford the Big Red Dog**, by Norman  
Bridwell

**Wait Till the Moon is Full**, by Margaret  
Wise Brown

**Stellaluna**, by Jannell Cannon

**The Very Hungry Caterpillar**, by Eric  
Carle

**Millions of Cats**, by Wanda Gag

**Chicka Chicka Boom Boom**, by Bill  
Martin Jr. and Lois Ehlert

**Curious George**, by H.A. Rey

**The Cat in the Hat**, by Dr. Seuss

**The Bunny Planet**, by Rosemary Wells

## **THREE TO FIVE YEARS**

At this age children can enjoy more complex stories and understand humor.

**Country Mouse and City Mouse**, by  
Jan Brett

**Stone Soup**, by Marcia Brown

**The Three Bears**, by Paul Galdone

**Hershel and the Hanukkah Goblins**, by  
Eric Kimmel

**The Story of Ferdinand**, by Munro Leaf

**Make Way for Ducklings**, by Robert  
McClosky

**Tikki Tikki Tembo**, by Arlene Mosel

**The Tale of Peter Rabbit**, by Beatrix  
Potter

**Sylvester and the Magic Pebble**, by  
William Steig

**Lyle, Lyle Crocodile**, by Bernard Waber

This reading list was developed at the American Library Association (ALA) under the Born to Read Project, which builds partnerships between librarians and health care providers to reach out to new and expectant parents and help them raise children who are "born to read."

# Resources

## AMERICA READS CHALLENGE: READ\*WRITE\*NOW! PUBLICATIONS

The following AMERICA READS CHALLENGE: *READ\*WRITE\*NOW!* publications have been placed on the U.S. Department of Education's Internet Web site <<http://www.ed.gov>> for your unlimited use.

- READ\*WRITE\*NOW! Basic Kit: Activities for Reading and Writing Fun
- READ\*WRITE\*NOW! Partners Tutoring Program
- READ\*WRITE\*NOW! Early Childhood Kit (of which this booklet is a part)
- READ\*WRITE\*NOW! Just Add Kids: A Resource Directory of Learning Partners, Reading Sites, and Other Literacy Organizations That Serve Children and Their Families
- READ\*WRITE\*NOW! Learning to Read, Reading to Learn: Helping Children with Learning Disabilities to Succeed

## FEDERAL SOURCES OF ASSISTANCE FOR CHILDREN FROM BIRTH THROUGH FIVE

Corporation for National Service  
Training and Technical Assistance, Rm. 4821  
1201 New York Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20525

Even Start  
U.S. Department of Education  
Compensatory Education Programs  
Office of Elementary and Secondary Ed.  
600 Independence Avenue, SW  
Room 4400-Portals Building  
Washington, DC 20202-6132

Title I  
U.S. Department of Education  
Compensatory Education Programs  
Office of Elementary and Secondary Ed.  
600 Independence Avenue, SW  
Room 4400-Portals Building  
Washington, DC 20202-6132

Head Start  
U.S. Department of Health and Human  
Services  
Administration for Children and Families  
Office of Public Affairs  
370 L'Enfant Promenade, SW  
Washington, DC 20202

Child Care Bureau  
U.S. Department of Health and Human  
Services  
Administration for Children and Families  
Office of Public Affairs  
370 L'Enfant Promenade, SW  
Washington, DC 20202

National Institute of Child Health and Human  
Development  
U.S. Department of Health and Human  
Services  
National Institutes of Health  
Building 31, Room 2A32, MSC-2425  
31 Center Drive  
Bethesda, MD 20892-2425

National Information Center for Children and  
Youth with Disabilities  
P.O. Box 1492  
Washington, DC 20013

Office of Special Education Programs  
U.S. Department of Education  
600 Independence Avenue, SW  
Switzer Building, Room 4613  
Washington, DC 20202

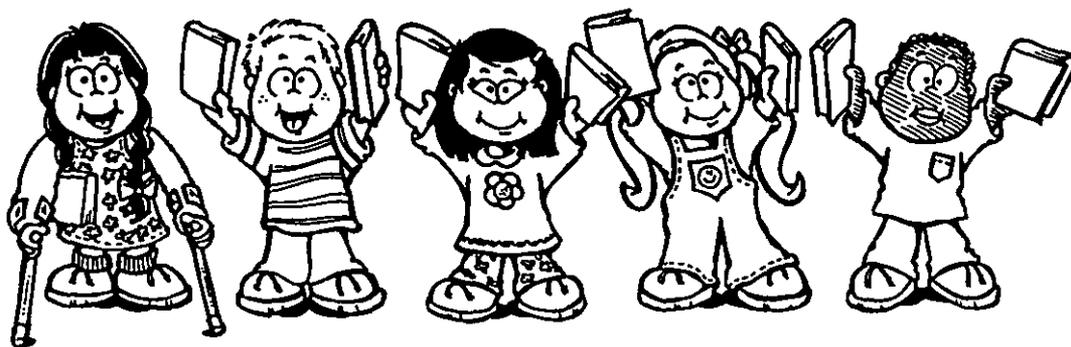
**Sign-On for the Partnership  
for Family Involvement in Education**

AMERICA READS CHALLENGE

READY★SET★READ

FOR FAMILIES

Early Childhood Language Activities  
for Children from Birth through Age Five



A Joint Project of the Corporation for National Service,  
the U.S. Department of Education, and  
the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Corporation for National Service  
Harris P. Wofford  
Chief Executive Officer

U.S. Department of Education  
Richard W. Riley  
Secretary

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services  
Donna E. Shalala  
Secretary

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We also wish to acknowledge the graphic design work of Eve Guianan and Loren Holtkamp of Books and Beyond, with production oversight by Ellie Topolovac and Sue Holtkamp of Books and Beyond.

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## Dear Family Member:

Welcome to **READY★SET★READ**, an **AMERICA READS CHALLENGE** booklet that is filled with activities and ideas that you can use to help your young children learn about language. Families<sup>1</sup> are their children's first teachers. As a family member you begin teaching your babies about language as you welcome them into the world with smiles and caring words. You respond to your children's coos, babbles, early words, and simple sentences. By the time your children are preschoolers, they know a lot about language. You have spent many hours listening, talking, reading, and writing with them.

Most of the activities in **READY★SET★READ** are simple to do with materials found in your home or at the library. The activities can be added to your life at home as you and your children play, work, and grow together.

The activities are presented for four age groups:

- **Young Babies** (Birth to 8 months)
- **Crawlers and Walkers** (8 to 18 months)
- **Toddlers** (18 to 36 months)
- **Preschoolers** (3 to 5 years)

The ideas for one age group may also work for a younger or older child. Using what you know about your child's skills and interests can help you decide which activities to use. You can read the section for one age group now and save the others for later.

Children learn about language when their families:

- Listen and talk with their children a lot
- Read out loud to their children every day
- Keep reading and writing materials where children can reach them on their own
- Show children how they use reading and writing to learn, have fun, and get jobs done

Many children are early readers because they have learned from their families that reading and writing are worthwhile and useful activities.

On the next page are some simple tips to help you teach your young children about listening, speaking, reading, and writing. These basic, daily activities can make a difference in your child's language growth.

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<sup>1</sup>In this booklet "families" refers to all of the adults who have nurturing relationships with a child--a mother, father, grandparent, other relative, or close friend.

## TIPS FOR FAMILIES AS THEIR CHILDREN'S FIRST TEACHER

- Talk with and listen to your children as you play and do daily activities together.
- Read with your children at a regular time every day and when they ask you.
- Take toddlers and preschoolers to the library so that they can choose books to read at home. Find out about your library's special books and services.
- Create a special place in your home for your children to read and write.
- Keep books and other reading materials where children can reach them. Add new books often.
- Keep writing materials such as washable, nontoxic crayons and markers, paints and brushes, and different kinds of paper where your children can reach them.
- Take books and writing materials for your children with you whenever you leave home, so that they can read or write at the doctor's office, on the bus, and in the car.
- Show your children how you read and write every day to have fun and to get things done.
- Point out to your children the printed words in your home and in the community.
- Encourage your children to do things for themselves when they are ready. Let them feed and dress themselves, and clean up after themselves even if these tasks take more time and are not done perfectly.

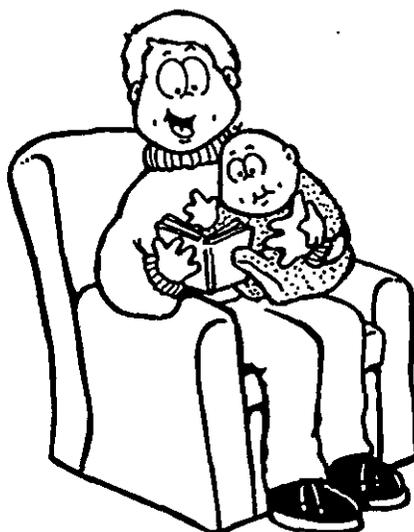
**GETTING TO KNOW YOU:**

**ACTIVITIES  
FOR  
YOUNG  
BABIES**

(Birth to 8 Months Old)

## WHAT DO YOUNG BABIES DO?

- Cry, make other sounds, and move their bodies.
- Listen and respond to the sounds and voices around them.
- Coo, gurgle, laugh, and babble to themselves and others.
- Enjoy listening to stories.
- Smile when people smile at them.
- Respond to their names.
- Take turns while singing and playing with another person.
- Pick up objects with their fingers and thumbs.
- Move objects from one hand to the other.

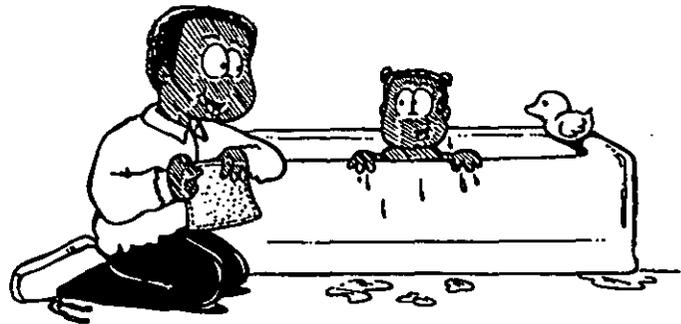


## HOW DO YOUNG BABIES LEARN?

Katie is in the bathtub splashing in the water with both hands. Her father sits on the floor next to the tub making sure she is safe. "Katie, Katie," he says as he picks up a washcloth. "Are you ready to play our special game?"

Katie looks up and sees her father's smiling face. She smiles at him and laughs. He says, "Let's play Peek-a-Boo," and puts a washcloth in front of his face. Katie reaches out and pats the top of his head.

Her father says, "Peek-a-Boo, Katie, I can't see you." He lowers the washcloth so his eyes are no longer covered. Katie squeals with delight. He covers his eyes again and says, "Peek-a-Boo, Katie, I still can't see you."



Katie's father holds the washcloth out toward her, saying, "Your turn, Katie." She takes the washcloth from his hand and puts it in front of her face. Her father says, "Where's Katie?"

Katie drops the washcloth in the water and splashes with her hands. She babbles to her father, "Dadadada. Babababa." He says, "I think you're saying that you're tired of playing Peek-a-Boo. Let's play with your sponges."

---

**Like many young babies, Katie is learning about language:**

- She knows that it's fun to play with another person.
- She looks up when her father says her name.
- She smiles when her father smiles at her.

**Katie's father helps her learn about language:**

- He talks with her during a daily activity--bathtime.
- He says her name again and again so that she will learn to recognize it.
- He takes several turns in their game and then encourages her to take a turn.
- He responds to her babbles as if he knows what she is saying.

## ACTIVITIES AND IDEAS FOR YOUNG BABIES

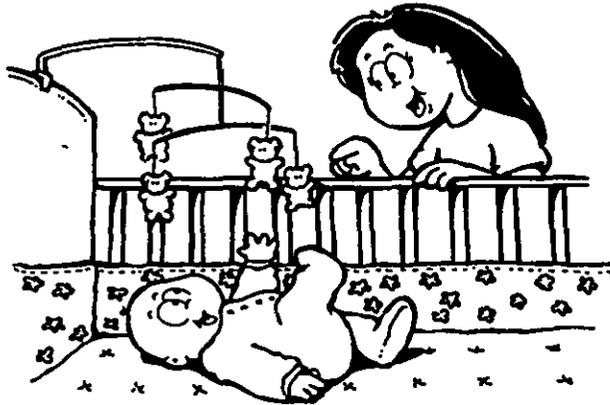
AGE	ACTIVITIES
<p><b>YOUNG BABIES: BIRTH TO 8 MONTHS OLD</b></p>	<p><b>Listening and Talking</b></p> <p>Young babies make sounds and move their bodies.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Listen and talk to your baby throughout the day. Get to know the meaning of your baby's cries and gestures. Listen to the sounds the baby makes and watch the way the baby's body moves.</li> <li>• Take your time while feeding, diapering, and bathing your baby. Sing songs, say nursery rhymes, and smile and coo back at the baby's smiles and coos. In this way your baby will learn that you think what he or she says is important and that people take turns when talking with each other.</li> </ul> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 10px; margin-top: 20px;"> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>How to help your baby's caregiver:</b></p> <p>Tell your caregiver how your baby communicates with the family. Explain the meaning of your baby's cries, babbles, gestures, and words. Ask the caregiver to tell you how your baby expresses his or her wants and needs.</p> </div>

**AGE****ACTIVITIES**

**YOUNG BABIES:  
BIRTH TO 8  
MONTHS OLD**

Young babies listen to the sounds and voices around them.

- Talk to your baby about what you both are doing and what he or she sees and hears. "I see you looking at your mobile. I'll touch it gently to make the faces move back and forth."
- Tell your baby through your words and actions how much he or she is loved and valued.
- Give your baby simple directions with words and gestures. Point, look toward something, or hold out your hand while talking to the baby. Ask, "Are you hot?" Then, lift up your arms and say, "Please lift up your arms so I can take off your sweater."



AGE	ACTIVITIES
<p><b>YOUNG BABIES: BIRTH TO 8 MONTHS OLD</b></p>	<p><b>Reading</b></p> <p>Young babies like being close to their families.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Many people say you should start reading to your baby at birth. Even though your baby doesn't understand your words, he or she loves to sit on your lap, hear your voice, and have special time with just you. You will feel relaxed and the baby will learn to think of reading as a pleasant activity.</li> <li>• Let your baby set the pace for your reading times. When the baby loses interest in reading, play a game, or do something else together.</li> </ul> <div data-bbox="508 861 1397 1038" style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin: 10px 0;"> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>How to help your baby's caregiver:</b></p> <p>Tell your caregiver about your baby's favorite books and show your caregiver the words to songs and rhymes in your home language, so that your baby can feel secure at home and at child care.</p> </div> <p>Young babies use all their senses to learn.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Babies are likely to crumple, shake, and chew books just as they do with other things. Look for soft cloth or vinyl books that can be washed.</li> <li>• Choose books with simple, large pictures or designs set against a solid background on each page. Ask your librarian to suggest books for babies, and look for children's books in good condition at yard sales and neighborhood bazaars.</li> </ul> <div data-bbox="797 1449 1116 1768" style="text-align: center; margin-top: 20px;">  </div>

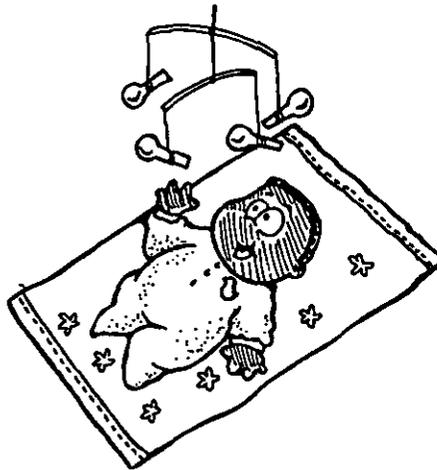
AGE	ACTIVITIES
<b>YOUNG BABIES: BIRTH TO 8 MONTHS OLD</b>	<p data-bbox="442 314 893 348"><b>Developing Muscles For Writing</b></p> <p data-bbox="442 378 1224 412">Young babies are learning to use their hands and fingers.</p> <ul data-bbox="442 442 1428 795" style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="442 442 1428 570">• Help your baby develop hand and finger muscles. Place a simple rattle in your 3-month-old baby's hand. Hold out a sponge for your 5-month-old to grab. Give your 8-month-old a piece of paper to crumple.</li> <li data-bbox="442 600 1428 668">• Encourage your baby when he or she tries to do things such as pulling off socks and holding a bottle while sitting in your lap.</li> <li data-bbox="442 697 1428 795">• Play with your baby. Shake a rattle then hand it to the baby to have a turn shaking it. Hold out your hand so that the baby can hand the rattle back to you.</li> </ul> <div data-bbox="475 855 1400 1034" style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 10px; margin-top: 20px;"> <p data-bbox="723 868 1146 902" style="text-align: center;"><b>How to help your baby's caregiver:</b></p> <p data-bbox="492 932 1331 1017">Ask your caregiver what toys and materials your baby plays with at child care. Discuss often the new things your baby is learning to do without help at home and at child care.</p> </div>

**AGE****ACTIVITIES**

**YOUNG BABIES:  
BIRTH TO 8  
MONTHS OLD**

Young babies are learning that they can make things happen.

- Watch your baby to see what he or she likes to do. Provide play materials that match the baby's skills and interests. Offer toys the baby can use to make noise, such as plastic keys on a ring to hold and shake, soft toys that squeak when squeezed, a wooden spoon to hold and bang on the floor.
- A cradle gym tied to a crib or playpen will encourage your baby to reach out and try to touch the items and make them move. Remove the cradle gym when the baby gets strong enough to pull it down.



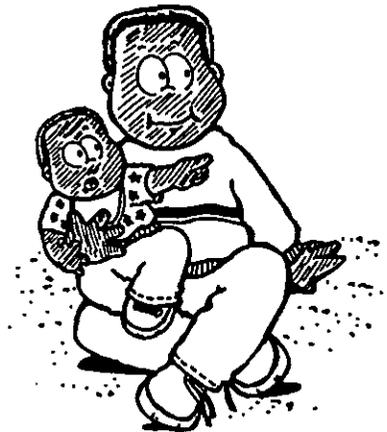
**ENJOYING OUR COMPANY:**

**ACTIVITIES  
FOR  
CRAWLERS AND WALKERS**

**(8 to 18 Months Old)**

## WHAT DO CRAWLERS AND WALKERS DO?

- Use sounds and gestures to say hello or get attention.
- Point at things they want.
- Say a few simple words.
- Like rhymes and simple songs.
- Enjoy reading with a favorite person.
- Turn the pages in sturdy cardboard books.
- Put objects such as nesting cups inside each other.
- Fill containers with water or small objects, then dump them out.
- Hold large crayons and make marks on paper.



## HOW DO CRAWLERS AND WALKERS LEARN?

Marcus picks up a book with cardboard pages and a duck on the cover. He puts the book in his mouth for a moment, then waves it in the air. Marcus looks at his big sister, Maria, and makes noises that sound a lot like words. Maria says, "Do you want to read? Bring the book to me. We can read together."

With book in hand, Marcus crawls to Maria. She lifts Marcus into her lap and holds the book so that he can see it. She points to the duck on the cover, "That's a duck. Let's see what's inside."



Marcus turns the page. He pats the picture and says something that sounds like words. "That's right," says Maria. "The baby is in the bathtub."

After looking at a few more pages, Marcus squirms and wiggles. "Okay," says Maria. "Have you read enough? Let me help you down." She puts Marcus on the floor and he crawls away.

---

**Like many other crawlers and walkers, Marcus is learning about language:**

- He knows that people will respond to his sounds and actions.
- He thinks it's fun to look at books with another person.
- He knows how to wait for his turn while talking and reading with his sister.

**Marcus's sister, Maria, helps him learn about language:**

- She responds to his sounds and actions as if he were saying words.
- She lets him turn the pages of the book.
- She talks to him about what he seems to be saying.
- She lets him find something else to do when he has lost interest in reading.

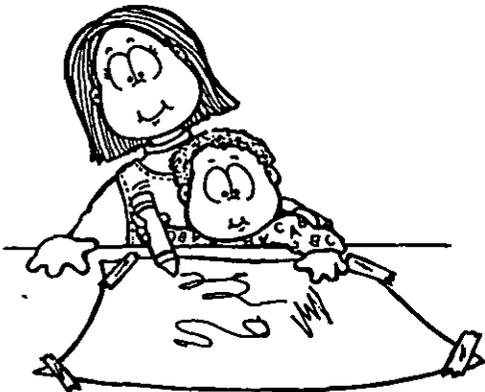
## ACTIVITIES AND IDEAS FOR CRAWLERS AND WALKERS

AGE	ACTIVITIES
<p><b>CRAWLERS AND WALKERS: 8 TO 18 MONTHS OLD</b></p>	<p><b>Listening and Talking</b></p> <p>Crawlers and walkers are learning that it's fun to be with other people.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Help your baby learn about taking turns the way people do when they talk with each other. Sing songs and play games such as Peek-a-Boo, hiding the toy under the blanket, and handing objects back and forth. At first you may have to take more turns than the baby does.</li> <li>• When your baby babbles, talk back. Make the same sounds the baby makes or teach new ones.</li> <li>• Respond when your baby wants to play a familiar game: "Oh good, you brought me the ball. Let's sit down and roll it on the carpet."</li> </ul> <p>Crawlers and walkers use gestures and actions to "talk" to you.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Respond when your baby shakes his or her head, points to something out of reach, or lifts his or her arms. Talk about what the baby seems to want to say. "Do you want to get out of my lap? Here's a wet cloth so you can wipe your hands."</li> <li>• Name the things your baby points to. "That's a <i>muffin</i>. Do you want a muffin?" Say the words for feelings and actions. "Aunt Nikki is <i>funny</i>, isn't she?" "I saw you <i>climb up</i> the stairs."</li> </ul> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-top: 10px;"> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>How to help your baby's caregiver:</b></p> <p>Tell the caregiver about the gestures your baby uses to ask questions, make requests, say hello, and get someone's attention. Ask the caregiver to tell you the words and phrases your baby seems to understand.</p> </div>

AGE	ACTIVITIES
<p><b>CRAWLERS AND WALKERS: 8 TO 18 MONTHS OLD</b></p>	<p>Crawlers and walkers learn to say a few words.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Show your excitement when your baby begins to talk. Talk with your baby about the names of objects, actions, and feelings.</li> <li>• Look at and listen to things together with your baby. Talk about what you see and hear. "See the bird. She's flying up to her nest in the tree. Do you hear the truck? I'll lift you up to the window so you can see it."</li> <li>• Listen carefully to your baby's tone of voice. The baby may use the same word to mean different things. For example: <p style="margin-left: 40px;">Alphonso stands at the window looking outside. He asks, "Sandy?" Grandma says what she thinks Alphonso means, "Where did Sandy go?" Then Grandma answers his question, "Sandy went outside."</p> </li> <li>• Let your baby know that you think books and reading are fun. Comment when you see your baby "reading." "Is the monkey in your book taking a bath? Does he splash in the water the way you do?"</li> </ul> 

AGE	ACTIVITIES
<p><b>CRAWLERS AND WALKERS: 8 TO 18 MONTHS OLD</b></p>	<p><b>Reading</b></p> <p>Crawlers and walkers can join in during story times.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read with your baby every day. Babies enjoy short, simple stories, rhymes, and songs. Read the same books over and over, and also read new ones. Because your baby probably won't pay attention for long, it's best to read for a short while many times during the day.</li> <li>• Point to the pictures and name the objects. Ask your baby to point and name things, too. Smile, change your tone of voice, nod, and make faces when you read. Your baby will have fun copying your words and actions.</li> <li>• Let your baby choose the books and set the pace for reading. Read books with thick, cardboard pages so that the baby can turn the pages. You don't have to look at every page, read the whole page, or finish the book at one sitting.</li> </ul> <div data-bbox="550 1019 1400 1257" style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 10px; margin: 10px 0;"> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>How to help your baby's caregiver:</b></p> <p>Volunteer to help the caregiver make a book about the things babies do at child care. Paste photographs or simple drawings on cardboard, cover with clear adhesive paper, punch holes in the cover and finished pages, and bind with a piece of string. Make new books during the year.</p> </div> <p>Crawlers and walkers like to look at books on their own.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide books that appeal to your baby. Babies may like books with simple drawings and photographs of familiar objects, animals, and scenes from daily life such as taking a bath, eating, or playing outdoors.</li> <li>• Store cardboard, cloth, and plastic books on low, open shelves along with other safe toys. Encourage your baby to choose a book to look at and help your baby return it to the shelf afterwards.</li> </ul>

AGE	ACTIVITIES
<p><b>CRAWLERS AND WALKERS: 8 TO 18 MONTHS OLD</b></p>	<p><b>Developing Muscles For Writing</b></p> <p>Crawlers and walkers can use their fingers, thumbs, and hands.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When your baby learns to move a bottle or a toy from one hand to the other, hand a toy to the baby and say, "Now give it back to me."</li> <li>• Provide toys and household items that the baby can put together and take apart, fit inside each other, or fill and empty (e.g., large plastic snap beads, a set of plastic measuring cups, or a box filled with bean bags).</li> <li>• Encourage your baby's independence. When your baby can pick up small objects with the index finger and thumb, offer finger foods such as pieces of banana. Grasping food will build the muscles in the baby's hands and fingers. Your baby will feel good about doing things without help. Allow the baby to pull off socks and shoes, and give the baby a spoon to help feed him- or herself.</li> </ul> <div data-bbox="520 1095 1395 1244" style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin: 10px 0;"> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>How to help your baby's caregiver:</b></p> <p>Ask the caregiver to suggest some inexpensive household items that are safe play materials for crawlers and walkers.</p> </div> <div data-bbox="768 1351 1148 1798" style="text-align: center; margin-top: 20px;"> </div>

AGE	ACTIVITIES
<b>CRAWLERS AND WALKERS: 8 TO 18 MONTHS OLD</b>	<p>Crawlers and walkers can scribble with crayons and markers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Give your baby large, nontoxic crayons and large pieces of scrap paper such as brown paper bags from the grocery store. At first, babies often put the crayons in their mouths, but show your baby how to use the crayons to make marks on paper.</li><li>• Introduce large, nontoxic markers when your baby has learned to keep crayons out of the mouth most of the time.</li></ul> 

**TALKING ABOUT ME:**

**ACTIVITIES  
FOR  
TODDLERS**

(18 to 36 Months Old)

## WHAT DO TODDLERS DO?

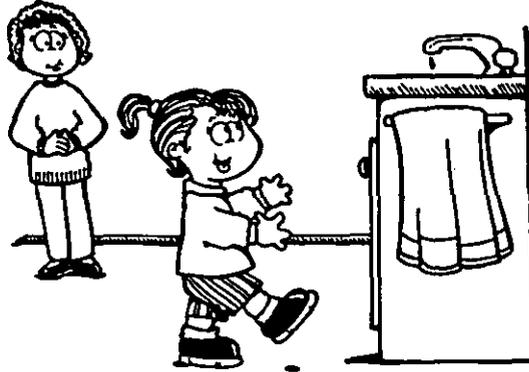
- Learn new words every day.
- Speak using groups of words ("Red go out").
- Take turns while talking with people.
- Ask many questions ("What that?").
- Name objects in picture books ("Ball").
- Follow two-part directions ("Pick up the socks and put them in the basket.").
- Say "no" and "not."
- Copy adult voices and actions.
- Follow simple stories.
- Look at books on their own.
- Join in when a book has rhymes and repeated words.
- Scribble with crayons and washable markers.



## HOW DO TODDLERS LEARN?

Rosa tugs on Ms. Vega's arm and says, "Wet."  
Ms. Vega says, "Your diaper is wet. Let's go change it."

Rosa lies down on the changing table. Ms. Vega washes her hands and tells Rosa what she is doing. "I'm washing away all the germs so you will stay healthy. I'm taking off your shorts. They're red, like your sneakers." Rosa says, "Red sneakers."



Ms. Vega takes a diaper from the shelf. She replaces Rosa's wet diaper with a dry one. "All done," says Ms. Vega. "Wash hands?" asks Rosa. "Yes," says Ms. Vega, "let's wash our hands."

Rosa heads for the sink, singing. "This way, wash hands, wash hands, wash hands." Ms. Vega sings along, then says, "Rosa, you learned a new song to sing." "Sing song," says Rosa.

### Like many toddlers, Rosa is learning about language:

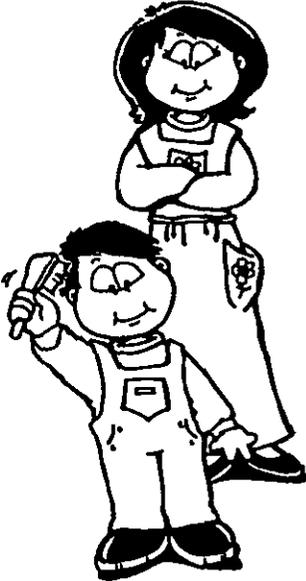
- She communicates her needs using groups of words.
- She repeats words she hears adults speak.
- She learns a simple song.
- She asks questions.
- She answers questions.

### Rosa's caregiver helps her learn about language:

- She responds to Rosa's request by answering with a group of words.
- She describes what she is doing and names a color—red.
- She asks a simple question that Rosa knows how to answer.
- She sings with Rosa, then congratulates her on learning the song.

# ACTIVITIES AND IDEAS FOR TODDLERS

AGE	ACTIVITIES
<p><b>TODDLERS: 18 TO 36 MONTHS OLD</b></p>	<p><b>Listening and Talking</b></p> <p>Toddlers are learning to talk about the present, past, and future.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Young toddlers tend to talk about the present. "Me want cookie." You can help your toddler learn new words to talk about what he or she did in the past and will do in the future.               <p style="margin-left: 40px;">"Yesterday you went down the slide at the park. That was fun."</p> <p style="margin-left: 40px;">"Tomorrow we're going to the store. You can help push the cart."</p> </li> <li>• Talk with your toddler about what happened during the day:               <p style="margin-left: 40px;">"You had a busy day. This morning, you and Sam played in the sprinkler. You ate a peanut butter sandwich for lunch. After your nap we visited Poppy. What else did we do?"</p> </li> <li>• Talk with your toddler about what you will do tomorrow. "I think it's going to be sunny tomorrow. What would you like to do?"</li> </ul> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 10px; margin-top: 10px; text-align: center;"> <p><b>How to help your toddler's caregiver:</b></p> <p>Ask the caregiver what happened during the day. Talk to your toddler about the day's events at child care while eating dinner or at bedtime.</p> </div>

AGE	ACTIVITIES
TODDLERS: 18 TO 36 MONTHS OLD	<p data-bbox="464 342 1037 374">Toddlers want to learn more about talking.</p> <ul data-bbox="464 406 1410 693" style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="464 406 1410 566">• Some toddlers learn new words and phrases rapidly. Others still use gestures and sounds to tell their families what they want and need. Talk and read with your toddler, name the things the toddler points to, and tell the toddler the words he or she can use to make requests. "Say, 'Milk, please'."</li><li data-bbox="464 597 1410 693">• Most toddlers understand more words than they can say. Give your toddler simple directions and praise the child for following them:<p data-bbox="657 725 1199 789">"Please go to the bathroom and get your hairbrush."</p><p data-bbox="657 821 1199 885">"Great! You got the brush. Now you can brush your hair."</p></li></ul> 

AGE	ACTIVITIES
<b>TODDLERS: 18 TO 36 MONTHS OLD</b>	<p>Toddlers use words to have fun and to learn.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Play make-believe with your toddler. You can pretend to talk on the phone, feed a doll or stuffed animal, or go shopping. Talk while you play, and encourage your toddler to talk back: <p style="margin-left: 40px;">"Brring, Brring. Hello. Yes, Todd's here. Would you like to talk to him? Okay, I'll give him the phone."</p> </li> <li>• Offer props such as a doctor's kit to help your toddler talk about her fears. She can be the doctor, while you are the patient. "Oh good! That shot only hurt a little."</li> <li>• Say silly rhymes, such as, "The <i>bed</i> is on her <i>head</i>." Make up nonsense words like, "It's time to <i>skidaddle</i> to bed." Add a new verse to a song: "...and on his farm he had a <i>pickle</i>..."</li> <li>• Ask your toddler silly questions to which the answer is "No"—one of every toddler's favorite words. "Do puppies wear pajamas?" "Is the sky green?"</li> </ul>

AGE	ACTIVITIES
<p><b>TODDLERS: 18 TO 36 MONTHS OLD</b></p>	<p><b>Reading</b></p> <p>Toddlers like listening to stories.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have a special time for reading with your toddler every day. Some families read after dinner or as a part of their bedtime routine. Toddlers may want to read a favorite book—again and again—because they love the story and love feeling close to you. When they get older they will have new favorites.</li> <li>• Read when your toddler asks you to, so that your toddler will know that you think reading is important. If you can't stop what you are doing, suggest that the child look at a book alone for a while or ask another family member to read to the child.</li> <li>• Take your toddler to the library so that the child can pick out his or her own books. Keep the books in a special place at home so that they won't get lost or damaged. Watch for secondhand children's books to buy at yard sales and local bazaars.</li> </ul> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin: 10px 0;"> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>How to help your toddler's caregiver:</b></p> <p>Tell the caregiver about the books you and your toddler like to read at home. Ask for suggestions of books your toddler would enjoy. Look for these books at the library or borrow them from the child care program.</p> </div> <p>Toddlers like to join in while you read out loud</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Look for books that let your toddler do something such as touch and feel the pictures. Some books can be scratched and sniffed, or squeezed to make noises. Some books have pull-tabs that make things pop up or move to reveal hidden pictures. Books like these may wear out before your toddler gets tired of reading them.</li> <li>• Choose books with repeated words, rhymes, and phrases that your toddler can remember. If you read these books again and again, the child might join in at the right time and feel that he or she is reading too.</li> </ul>

AGE	ACTIVITIES
<p>TODDLERS: 18 TO 36 MONTHS OLD</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ask your toddler questions about the pictures in a book. "Who's that?" "Where do you think he's going?" "What do cows say?" Have the child point to people and objects in the pictures. "Where's the...?"</li> <li>• Talk about your toddler's real-life experiences. "That looks like your raincoat. What did you do when you played in the rain today?"</li> </ul> <p>Toddlers like to look at books on their own.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keep your toddler's books on low, open shelves or in an open box or basket on the floor so that the child can reach them without help. Stand the books upright so that the covers are easy to see. Keep books in different places—in the bag that goes to child care, in the bathroom, in the car, and next to the child's bed.</li> <li>• Suggest books your toddler might like to look at alone. The child can talk about the people and animals in a favorite book, make up a story about what's happening in a wordless picture book, or name the objects in a book filled with pictures.</li> <li>• Help your toddler learn to care for books. Show your child how to turn the pages so they won't tear. Remind your child to put away books after reading them. Some well-loved books will wear out.</li> <li>• Ask your toddler to help you fix his or her own damaged books. Your child can show you which pages are torn and hold the book open while you patch the pages.</li> </ul> <div data-bbox="811 1353 1080 1719" style="text-align: center;"> </div>

AGE	ACTIVITIES
<p><b>TODDLERS: 18 TO 36 MONTHS OLD</b></p>	<p><b>Building Muscles For Writing</b></p> <p>Toddlers can build the muscles in their fingers while playing with homemade toys.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make a simple puzzle for your toddler by glueing a picture to cardboard and cutting it into five or six pieces. Provide dress-up clothes with buttons and zippers. Offer scrap paper to be torn.</li> <li>• Make play dough that your toddler can roll, pound, and squeeze. Mix together 2 cups flour, 1 cup salt, 1 cup water, and 1 table-spoon of vegetable oil. Put food coloring in the water if you like. Add more flour if the dough is sticky. Store in an air-tight plastic bag or container.</li> <li>• Let an older toddler borrow your safe kitchen tools—a wooden spoon, plastic knives and forks, a cookie cutter—to use with play dough.</li> </ul> <div data-bbox="520 1010 1395 1187" style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin: 10px 0;"> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>How to help your toddler's caregiver:</b></p> <p>Ask the caregiver for recipes for homemade fingerpaint and glue, and tips on using throwaways such as egg cartons and berry baskets as art materials for your toddler.</p> </div> <p>Toddlers use the muscles in their fingers and hands to do things for themselves.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plan your day so there's time for your toddler to wash, dress, and feed him—or herself. The child may take longer to put on sneakers than you do, but, "Me do it!" is a mark of pride.</li> <li>• Make your home toddler friendly. A refillable pump soap dispenser is easier for your toddler to use than a bar of soap, and a small plastic cup fits in the toddler's hand. Keep the child's toothbrush where he or she can reach it.</li> </ul>

**AGE****ACTIVITIES**

**TODDLERS: 18 TO  
36 MONTHS OLD**

Toddlers learn about writing by scribbling, watching you write, and seeing words around them.

- Look for inexpensive large pads of paper and large, nontoxic crayons, and washable markers. Save scrap paper and paper bags. Keep a supply of drawing and writing materials where your toddler can reach them.
- Ask your toddler to get some paper and crayons so you can write together. The child will learn about writing by watching you make a list, sign a check, or do a crossword puzzle. The child's scribbles are a way of copying what you are writing.
- Talk to your toddler about the scribbles. "You made a line and a dot. This line is thicker than that one. You used two colors, red and blue."
- Point to written words around you and read them out loud to your toddler. "Here comes our bus. It says 'Northside' on the front. That's where we're going." "These diapers are too small. We need a box that says 'over 30 pounds.'"



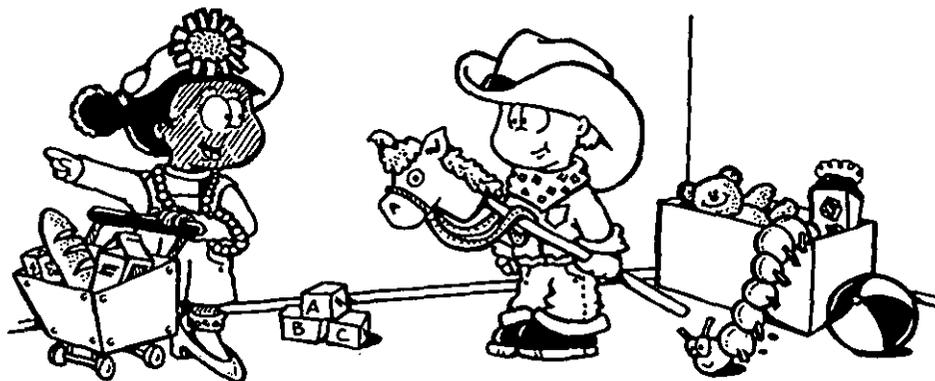
**USING LANGUAGE TO LEARN:**

**ACTIVITIES  
FOR  
PRESCHOOLERS**

**(3 to 5 Years Old)**

## WHAT DO PRESCHOOLERS DO?

- Listen to stories and to conversations.
- Talk to adults and to other children in complex sentences.
- Master many rules of grammar.
- Make up silly words and stories.
- Use language to think, to share ideas and feelings, and to learn new things.
- Enjoy the same books over and over and look at new books.
- Retell familiar stories to themselves and others.
- Think about what the characters in a book might feel or do.
- Draw and write with pencils, crayons, and markers.
- See print around them and watch adults read and write.
- Imitate adult writing by scribble writing.
- Copy shapes and some letters.



## HOW DO PRESCHOOLERS LEARN?

Gina bounces out of bed and hurries to the kitchen. She opens the cabinet, takes out a box of cereal, then puts it back. She takes out another box and says, "Grandpa, this is my cereal. It has a big 'P' and lots of stars."

Grandpa says, "That's good thinking." Gina points to a letter on the box, "That's a 'P'." She traces the letter in the air and says, " 'P' as in Peter. Peter's name starts with a 'P'. It's on his cubby."



Grandpa makes an offer. "Today, we can have our regular story time and then write together. I need to write a letter to a friend. You can write, too."

Gina puts her empty bowl in the sink and runs to find her mother. "Mom, I'm gonna read and write with Grandpa." Her mother says, "That sounds like fun. When I take you to family child care, I'll tell Ms. Jenkins that you like to write. You can write at her house and at home."

### Like many preschoolers, Gina is learning language:

- She knows that letters (the P) and pictures (the stars) have meaning.
- She knows there is a 'P' on her cereal box and at the beginning of Peter's name.
- She knows that people take turns when talking to each other.

### Gina's family helps her learn about language:

- They have a regular story time every day.
- Grandpa encourages her thinking, so Gina continues exploring the letters on the box.
- Grandpa offers to write with Gina.
- Mom talks to Ms. Jenkins, so that Gina can write at family child care and at home.

# ACTIVITIES AND IDEAS FOR PRESCHOOLERS

AGE	ACTIVITIES
<p><b>PRESCHOOLERS: 3 TO 5 YEARS OLD</b></p>	<p><b>Listening and Talking</b></p> <p>Preschoolers learn about language by listening and talking.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Start a conversation with your child by asking a question that has no right or wrong answer:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>"What did you think when you saw the tall tower you built?"</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Help your child become a creative thinker by asking, "Suppose that..." "What do you think..." "What if..."</li> <li>• Encourage your child to talk with older and younger family members. A child who has lots of opportunities to talk will learn how to put ideas into words.</li> <li>• Help your child choose a few special television shows that are just right for children of the same age and interests. Watch with your child and talk about what you see and hear. "Are those lions like the ones at the zoo?" Ask questions to find out what the child is learning. "Does our family do things like the family in the show? How are we different?"</li> <li>• Use television wisely. At family mealtimes, talk and enjoy each other's company. Make a list of things your child can do instead of watching television, such as looking at books, playing with brothers and sisters, or drawing pictures.</li> </ul>

## AGE

## ACTIVITIES

**PRESCHOOLERS: 3  
TO 5 YEARS OLD**

### How to help your child's caregiver:

Tell the caregiver about the things your child does at home. Doing this will help the caregiver start conversations with your child and encourage your child to talk.

Preschoolers learn about language by watching and listening to you.

- Think and plan out loud so that your child can see and hear you using language to solve problems or make plans.

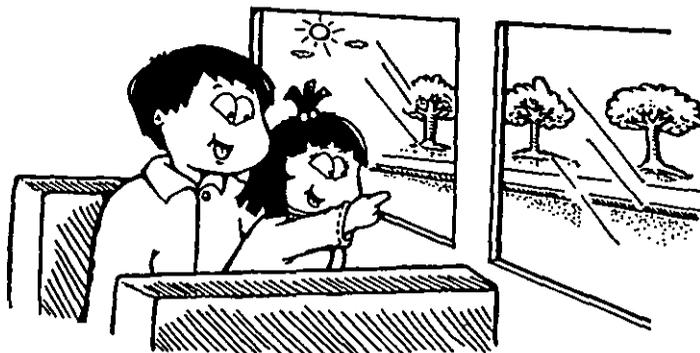
"Hi Elliott. Are we still on for basketball?"

"Great! I'll meet you at the park."

- Visit and talk about interesting places. Go to the library, the park, or a museum. Talk with your child about what you see during the visit. Ask questions about what the child sees. When you return, suggest that the child tell a relative or friend about the trip.

"Grandpa might like to hear about the giant insects we saw at the museum."

- Ask your child to help you do a chore—replace a battery in a toy, wash the car, or pull weeds. Talk to the child about what you are doing. The child will have fun and learn some new words.
- Take your child along when you do errands. The child will enjoy talking and learning with you at the supermarket, the laundromat, or wherever else you need to go. Children also like to look at what's happening in the neighborhoods along the way to and from these trips.



AGE	ACTIVITIES
<p><b>PRESCHOOLERS: 3 TO 5 YEARS OLD</b></p>	<p><b>Reading</b></p> <p>Preschoolers like many different kinds of books.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Look for paperback versions of your child's favorite books, in English and in your family's home language. Encourage family and friends to swap books and give them as gifts. And remember that yard sales and neighborhood bazaars often have very inexpensive secondhand children's books.</li> <li>• Make regular trips to the library to borrow books, tapes, and other materials. If possible, have your child get his or her own library card.</li> <li>• Let your child see him- or herself in books. Choose books about families like yours and people from your culture and ethnic group.</li> <li>• Ask the children's librarian at your local library to suggest books for your child. Get ideas from other families, caregivers, and people who know your child well.</li> <li>• Look for books that match your child's experiences: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>a special interest--bugs</i></li> <li><i>something familiar--going to child care</i></li> <li><i>a new event--going to the dentist</i></li> <li><i>a change in the family--the birth of a baby.</i></li> </ul> </li> </ul> <div data-bbox="541 1266 1392 1415" style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin: 10px 0;"> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>How to help your child's caregiver:</b></p> <p>Ask the caregiver about book clubs for young children and programs that offer inexpensive children's books.</p> </div> <div data-bbox="801 1478 1123 1872" style="text-align: center;"> </div>

AGE	ACTIVITIES
<p>PRESCHOOLERS: 3 TO 5 YEARS OLD</p>	<p>Preschoolers are more likely to learn to love books if they are read to.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Set aside a time each day when you and your child can relax and read together. Make these special times when you enjoy each other's company and explore the new worlds and ideas found in books. Children who are read to are more likely to love books and to be strong readers.</li> <li>• Read with lots of enthusiasm. Change your voice to fit different characters and feelings such as sad, excited, or happy.</li> <li>• Expect and encourage interruptions. Stop to talk about the pictures and the story in each book, and the ways they relate to your child's life. Ask and answer questions. Add information to help the child understand the story.</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;">"Blueberries are easy to pick because they grow on low bushes. Remember when we saw blueberries in the supermarket?"</p> <p>Preschoolers learn about reading when they look at books by themselves and when they see adults reading.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Set up a reading shelf, basket, or corner where your child can reach books without help. Store books upright so that the child can easily find the one he or she is looking for. Almost any room in the home—kitchen, bathroom, living room, or bedroom—is a good place to keep books.</li> <li>• Bring along a bag of books when you leave home. Your child can read on the bus or subway, in a car, at the laundromat, and at the doctor's office.</li> <li>• Show your child that reading is an important and useful skill. Children love to imitate adults. A child who sees you enjoying a book or magazine will want to do the same.</li> <li>• Show your child how you use books, newspapers, and other written materials to find out what time a store opens, what the weather will be like, or what you need for a recipe.</li> </ul>

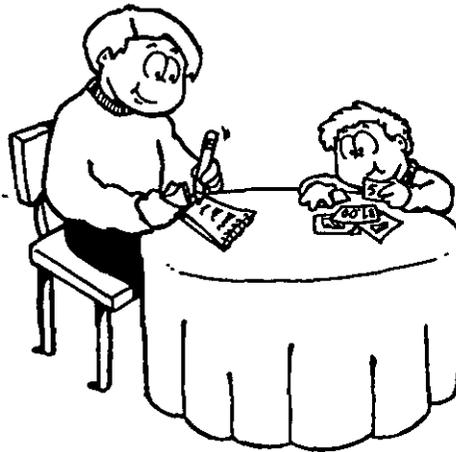
AGE	ACTIVITIES
<p>PRESCHOOLERS: 3 TO 5 YEARS OLD</p>	<p><b>Writing</b></p> <p>Preschoolers need to practice using the small muscles in their fingers and hands.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage your child to do things such as brushing teeth, buttoning and zipping clothes, and using forks and spoons without help.</li> <li>• Ask your child to help you do real jobs, such as peeling carrots, sorting and folding laundry, sweeping the porch, and making the beds.</li> <li>• Play with your child. Together you can thread beads on laces, do puzzles, and roll or pound homemade play dough.</li> </ul> <p>Ask your child's caregiver for ideas she or he may have.</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 10px; margin-top: 20px;"> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>How to help your child's caregiver:</b></p> <p>Tell the caregiver about the real jobs your child does at home. Exchange samples of your child's writing with the caregiver so that you will both know what the child is doing and learning.</p> </div>

**AGE****ACTIVITIES**

**PRESCHOOLERS: 3  
TO 5 YEARS OLD**

Preschoolers learn about writing when they see how people use writing every day.

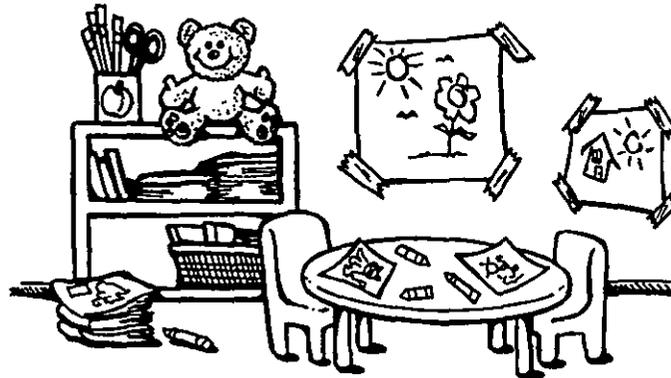
- Let your child see you write every day. When you make a note on the calendar, write a shopping list, sign in at the doctor's office, or take down a telephone message, talk to your child about what you're writing: "I'm writing a letter to Aunt Alice. Would you like to tell her about our walk to the library?"
- Show your child the words around us--cookbooks, shampoo, coupons, buses, street signs, and buildings--and illustrate their purpose. Hold up two cans of soup and say: "What kind of soup should we have--chicken noodle or vegetable?"



**AGE****ACTIVITIES****PRESCHOOLERS: 3  
TO 5 YEARS OLD**

Preschoolers like to do their own writing.

- Make sure your child has writing materials and places to write. Look around the house for items your child can use for writing--any kind of paper, crayons, markers, pencils. Put the writing materials in an open box on a low shelf or in a bottom drawer in the kitchen so that the child can reach them without your help.
- Set up a place for writing in the room where your family spends the most time. For example, you can shorten the legs on an old chair and table to make them the right height for your child, or you can often find secondhand, child-size furniture at thrift shops and yard sales. Keep catalogs and other writing materials in shoe boxes on the table.



- Talk with your child about how to write. If your child asks you how to make a letter, spell a name, or write a word, show the child how to do it. Otherwise, let your child write in his or her own way. You may not be able to read the writing, but the child can read it to you. Over time, the child will learn how to write words that others can read.

# Reading and Writing Play Materials

Children learn about reading and writing in several ways. They watch adults, try out their own ideas, solve problems, and figure out for themselves how spoken and written words are connected.

Families can help by providing a special place where children can read and write and by encouraging them to include reading and writing in their play activities. Here are some examples of reading and writing materials for young children.

## **Create a Special Place With:**

Table (homemade or purchased, sized for young children)  
Chair(s)  
Desk and chair  
Low, open shelves  
Bulletin board  
Clothesline and clothespins (to hang up children's writing)

## **Explore Letters and Numerals With:**

Magnet boards and alphabet and number magnets  
Alphabet and numeral blocks, tiles, and puzzles  
Alphabet and numeral sponges, stamps, and stamp pads  
Alphabet and counting books

## **Play Make-Believe With:**

Clipboards  
Envelopes  
Junk mail, catalogs, coupons  
Magazines  
Empty food containers  
File folders and boxes  
Mailbag and mailbox

## **Write With and On:**

Chalkboards (wall and lap)  
Chalk (white and colored)  
Easels  
Paint  
Brushes  
Paper (lined and unlined, different sizes, colors, weights, textures)  
Markers (washable, nontoxic, thick and thin tips)  
Crayons  
Colored pencils  
Erasable boards, markers, and erasers  
Magic slates  
Ready-made blank books  
Bookbinding materials (stapler, hole punch, laces)  
Scissors (for older toddlers and preschoolers)  
Typewriter  
Computer and developmentally appropriate writing programs

# American Library Association's *Suggested Book List for Young Readers*

This *Recommended Book List for Young Readers* provides suggestions for books that you can introduce to children at different ages.<sup>2</sup> Although some of these books have been developed for a particular age, many are old favorites that can be enjoyed at any age.

## **BIRTH THROUGH EIGHT MONTHS**

The following books have simple rhymes and poems.

**Big Fat Hen**, by Keith Baker

**Ten, Nine, Eight**, by Molly Bang

**Play Rhymes**, by Marc Brown

**Goodnight Moon**, by Margaret Wise Brown

**Tomie DePaola's Mother Goose**, by Tomie DePaola

**Eye Winker, Tom Tinker, Chin Chopper: 50 Musical Finger Plays**, by Tom Glazer

**Rosie's Walk**, by Pat Hutchins

**Read Aloud Rhymes for the Very Young**, by Jack Prelutsky

**Have You Seen My Duckling?**, by Nancy Tafuri

**My First Mother Goose**, by Rosemary Wells

## **EIGHT MONTHS THROUGH EIGHTEEN MONTHS**

These books are short with a little text and many rhymes. At this age children really enjoy holding cardboard books and turning pages.

**Moon Bear**, by Frank Asch

**Will I Have a Friend?**, by Miriam Cohen

**Corduroy**, by Don Freeman

**Where's Spot?**, by Eric Hill

**Mama, Do You Love Me?**, by Barbara Joose

**Peter's Chair**, by Ezra Jack Keats

**Pat the Bunny**, by Dorothy Kunhardt

**Clap Hands**, by Helen Oxenbury

**Seven Blind Mice**, by Ed Young

**"More, More, More" Said the Baby**, by Vera Williams

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<sup>2</sup> The U.S. Department of Education does not endorse particular books and recommends that parents review this list and make their own decision on the suitability of the books for their children.

## **EIGHTEEN THROUGH THIRTY-SIX MONTHS**

These books have more text and an easy-to-follow story that moves along quickly.

**The Little Red Hen**, by Bryon Barton

**Millions of Cats**, by Wanda Gag

**Clifford the Big Red Dog**, by Norman  
Bridwell

**Chicka Chicka Boom Boom**, by Bill  
Martin Jr. and Lois Ehlert

**Wait Till the Moon is Full**, by Margaret  
Wise Brown

**Curious George**, by H.A. Rey

**Stellaluna**, by Jannell Cannon

**The Cat in the Hat**, by Dr. Seuss

**The Very Hungry Caterpillar**, by Eric  
Carle

**The Bunny Planet**, by Rosemary Wells

## **THREE TO FIVE YEARS**

At this age children can enjoy more complex stories and understand humor.

**Country Mouse and City Mouse**, by  
Jan Brett

**Make Way for Ducklings**, by Robert  
McClosky

**Stone Soup**, by Marcia Brown

**Tikki. Tikki. Tembo**, by Arlene Mosel

**The Three Bears**, by Paul Galdone

**The Tale of Peter Rabbit**, by Beatrix  
Potter

**Hershel and the Hanukkah Goblins**, by  
Eric Kimmel

**Sylvester and the Magic Pebble**, by  
William Steig

**The Story of Ferdinand**, by Munro Leaf

**Lyle. Lyle Crocodile**, by Bernard Waber

This reading list was developed at the American Library Association (ALA) under the Born to Read Project, which builds partnerships between librarians and health care providers to reach out to new and expectant parents and help them raise children who are "born to read."

# Resources

## AMERICA READS CHALLENGE: READ\*WRITE\*NOW! PUBLICATIONS

The following AMERICA READS CHALLENGE: *READ\*WRITE\*NOW!* publications have been placed on the U.S. Department of Education's Internet Web site <<http://www.ed.gov>> for your unlimited use.

- READ\*WRITE\*NOW! Basic Kit: Activities for Reading and Writing Fun
- READ\*WRITE\*NOW! Partners Tutoring Program
- READ\*WRITE\*NOW! Early Childhood Kit (of which this booklet is a part)
- READ\*WRITE\*NOW! Just Add Kids: A Resource Directory of Learning Partners, Reading Sites, and Other Literacy Organizations That Serve Children and Their Families
- READ\*WRITE\*NOW! Learning to Read, Reading to Learn: Helping Children with Learning Disabilities to Succeed

## FEDERAL SOURCES OF ASSISTANCE FOR CHILDREN FROM BIRTH THROUGH FIVE

Corporation for National Service  
Training and Technical Assistance, Rm. 4821  
1201 New York Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20525

Even Start  
U.S. Department of Education  
Compensatory Education Programs  
Office of Elementary and Secondary Ed.  
600 Independence Avenue SW  
Room 4400-Portals Building  
Washington, DC 20202-6132

Title I  
U.S. Department of Education  
Compensatory Education Programs  
Office of Elementary and Secondary Ed.  
600 Independence Avenue SW  
Room 4400-Portals Building  
Washington, DC 20202-6132

Head Start  
U.S. Department of Health and Human  
Services  
Administration for Children and Families  
Office of Public Affairs  
370 L'Enfant Promenade SW  
Washington, DC 20202

Child Care Bureau  
U.S. Department of Health and Human  
Services  
Administration for Children and Families  
Office of Public Affairs  
370 L'Enfant Promenade SW  
Washington, DC 20202

National Institute of Child Health and Human  
Development  
U.S. Department of Health and Human  
Services  
National Institutes of Health  
Building 31, Room 2A32, MSC-2425  
31 Center Drive  
Bethesda, MD 20892-2425

National Information Center for Children and  
Youth with Disabilities  
P.O. Box 1492  
Washington, DC 20013

Office of Special Education Programs  
U.S. Department of Education  
600 Independence Avenue SW  
Switzer Building, Room 4613  
Washington, DC 20202