



Early Literacy: Building Healthy Brains

For Preschoolers: 3 to 4 years

Questions about this booklet or the information within it?

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Table of Contents

Page Number	Contents
5	What is Early Literacy?
6	To Help Preschoolers Be Ready to Learn...We Need to Help them Build Healthy Brains!
7	Why Read Aloud?
8	Help Your Child Start Off On the Right Foot By Building Early Literacy Skills
9	Help Your Child Start Off On the Right Foot By Building Early Literacy Skills (continued)
10	Songs for Switching Sounds
11	More Songs for Switching Sounds
12	Even More Songs for Switching Sounds
13	Segmenting, Rhyming and Blending Songs
14	Songs for Counting
15	Songs for Clapping and Skipping
16	Use More Interesting Words
17	Pretend With Me
18	Play With Sounds and Letters
19	Why Make Playdough for Me?
20	Monitoring Your Child's Development
21	What is Executive Function?
22	Executive Function Activities
23	Executive Function Activities (continued)
24	How Does Learning Happen?
25	The Joy of Printing Letters
26	Numeracy
27	Ages & Stages of Numeracy Development
28	Building Blocks for Reading Success
29	Go to the Library
30	Food Pyramid for Kids' Media Consumption
31	Stages of Play, Language, and Literacy Development
32	A Bit About Being Indigenous
33	Key Messages About Being Indigenous

Healthy Brain Development

Experiences

Face to Face

Playing

STORIES

Syllables

Segmenting

Reading

Well-Being

Nursery Rhymes

Blending

Cuddling

Engagement

Library

What is Early Literacy?

Early Literacy refers to the experiences that take place *before* a child can read and write

Expression

Bonding

Singing

Talking

Disconnect to Connect

Limiting Screen Time

Listening

Waiting

Pretending

Phonemic Awareness

Belonging

RHYMING

Taking

Play Dates

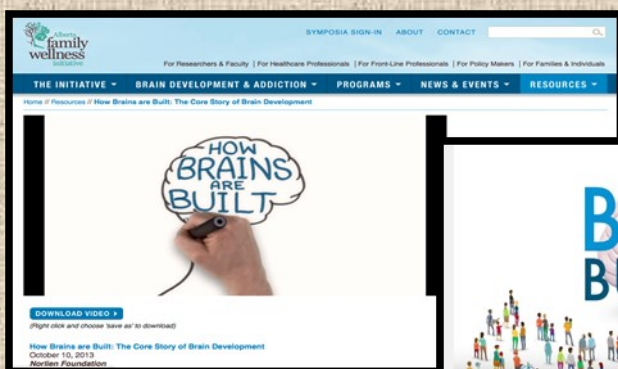
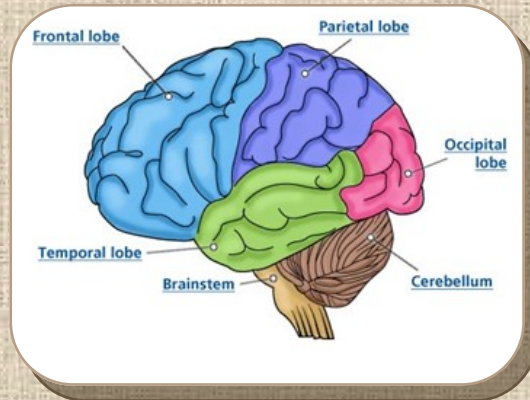
Commenting

Having Fun

Repetition

Following Your Child's Lead

To Help Preschoolers Be Ready to Learn... We Need to Help them Build Healthy Brains!



YouTube

Go to YouTube, and search “Alberta Family Wellness” for a group of 17 different 3-4 minute video clips.



- ⇒ How Brains are Built: The Core Story of Brain Development
- ⇒ Executive Function
- ⇒ Toxic Stress
- ⇒ Serve & Return
- ⇒ Brain Architecture

“The major difference between brain development in a child versus an adult is a matter of degree: *the brain is far more impressionable* (neuroscientists use the term plastic) in early life than in maturity...”

This plasticity has both a positive and a negative side. On the positive side, it means that young children’s brains are more open to learning and enriching influences. On the negative side, it also means that young children’s brains are more vulnerable to developmental problems...”

(Retrieved from: <https://www.zerotothree.org/resources/series/frequently-asked-questions-about-brain-development> Dec. 7, 2018)

<https://empowersimcoe.ca/early-literacy/>

Read Aloud 15 MINUTES
Every child. Every parent. Every day.

DOES READING ALOUD REALLY MATTER? YES!

More than one in three children arrive at kindergarten without the skills necessary for lifetime learning.

Research shows that reading aloud is the single most important thing you can do to help a child prepare for reading and learning.

LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT
The number of words that a child knows on entering kindergarten is a key predictor of his or her future success.

INSTILL A LOVE OF READING
Your example demonstrates that reading is important, pleasurable and valued.

KNOWLEDGE GAINED & SHARED
Books are a pleasure, yes, and they are also informative. You and your child can learn something new as you read aloud.

LITERACY SKILL BUILDING
Vocabulary. Phonics. Familiarity with the printed word. Storytelling. Comprehension. Reading aloud builds literacy skills.

BRAIN DEVELOPMENT
From birth to age 3 are critical years in the development of language skills.

BONDING
Is anything better than sharing a good book?

WHY READ ALOUD?

DON'T GOOD PARENTS ALREADY READ ALOUD DAILY? NO

More than 15% of young children, 3.1 million, are read to by family members fewer than three times a week.

Only 48% of young children in this country are read to each day.

Reading 15 minutes every day for 5 years:
27,375 MINUTES

IS 15 MINUTES ENOUGH TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE? YES!

456.25 HOURS

Help your Child Start Off On the Right Foot by... Building Early Literacy Skills: PART 2



Encourage your child to talk about experiences and retell stories. Tell your child about something that happened to you (e.g., "When I was at work, I couldn't find my keys..." or "I had a great day! First I..., then I...") and encourage him to talk about an experience like going to the zoo, or just about what they did today, or what they want to do tomorrow.

Introduce challenging words! While blowing bubbles, talk about how the bubbles are 'collapsing.' Explain the word 'collapsing' by saying "That means they are falling apart!"

Play with syllables! Children need to learn that words are made up of small sounds. Children must first be able to hear bigger chunks in words (baseball=base-ball). When driving in the car, or during mealtime, **clap out the parts** in the words for things you see (e.g., flow-ers = 2 claps; po-ta-to= 3 claps).



Talk about the sounds that letters make! Play "I Hear with My Little Ear, the very first sound in ____ (sssssssun)". Then point out the letter "s" on a cereal box (on fridge magnets, or on a soup label, etc...), and say, "Oh Look! Here is how you print the sound /s/! We call this the letter "s" ("ess")."

Play rhyming games! Tell children explicitly, "Hey! These words rhyme! They both sound the same at the end! Whenever possible read books that rhyme, sing songs that encourage you to produce a rhyme (e.g., Down by the Bay) and check out rhyming websites like: <https://www.scholastic.com/parents/books-and-reading/raise-a-reader-blog/3-best-rhyme-games-kids.html>

Scribble, and Write!



Draw a "WELCOME!" sign in front of your front door with chalk, get a white board for the kitchen and write notes (and read them back) to your children, get some crayons for the bathtub and talk about the super "lines", "circles" and "zig-zags" they make. Give them **paper and crayons**. Draw in the sandbox. Get a *Magna Doodle®* or an *Aqua Doodle®*! Get excited about their SCRIBBLES!

Show your Child his or her Name!

Whenever you see your child's name, highlight the first sound in their name (e.g., "Hey! That's *your* name! 'Monica'...../mmmmmonica'). Label the letters in her name. Make a SIGN for your child's bedroom door.



Talk about print concepts! While reading with your child **every day** draw your child's attention to the *front* and *back* of the book, the *title*, the *author* and *point to the text* as you read to show how print "works". If you see a long word point it out e.g., alligator -wow that's a long word.

Draw your child's attention to print!

As you drive up to the 'stop' sign, say "That sign says, STOP! That means we have to stop".



Read and Write IN FRONT OF your Child!

Read the newspaper, a magazine, or recipes or books, and write grocery lists, reminders, and "I Love You" notes on a white board in the kitchen. Point to the words and read them out loud so your child learns the concept that we can write down what we say.



Play with words & sounds in songs! When singing songs like "Twinkle Twinkle Little Star" change the words to "Twinkle Twinkle Little Computer" & pause to see if the child notices. Do the same with the sounds in words (e.g., Kwinkle, Kwinkle, little star...).



Encourage pretending! Help your child pretend by giving them ideas like, "let's play restaurant" & help them get the play started by talking about who should be the waiter, who should be the customer etc. Take on a role yourself e.g., "Excuse me, I'd like a table, where should I sit?"

Put Limits on TV Time! Research has shown that infants learn words **better from people** than from television! Research has also demonstrated that even when the television is on in the **background**, infants and their caregivers are **speaking less**.

Check out www.earlyintervention.simcoe.ca, click on "New Printable Handouts" and scroll down to our Favourite Books for Infants, Toddlers and Preschoolers.

Songs for Switching Sounds

I've Been Working on the Railroad

I've been working on the railroad, (pretend to hammer)

All the livelong day.

I've been working on the railroad,

Just to pass the time away.

Can't you hear the whistle blowing, (put hand up to ear)

Rise up so early in the morn, (push hands up)

Can't you hear the whistle blowing, (put hand up to ear)

Dinah, blow your horn.

Dinah won't you blow, (clap, or slap thighs)

Dinah won't you blow,

Dinah won't you blow your hor-or-orn!

Dinah won't you blow,

Dinah won't you blow,

Dinah won't you blow your horn.

Someone's in the kitchen with Dinah,

Someone's in the kitchen, I know-ow-ow-ow

Someone's in the kitchen with Dinah!

Strumming on the old Banjo! (pretend to strum)

And it went.... (continue strumming)

Fee-fi-fiddley-i-o (change to me-my-middley-i-o)

Fee-fi-fiddley-i-o (or...see-sigh-siddley-i-so)

Fee-fi-fiddley-i-o (or...bee-by-biddley-i-bo)

Strumming on the old Banjo!



Old MacDonald Had a Farm

Old MacDonald had a Farm,
ee-i-ee-i-o

And on that farm he had a (cow),

Kee-i-kee-i-ko,

With a /k/ /k/ here, and a /k/ /k/
there,

Here a /k/, There a /k/, Every-
where a /k/k/,

Old MacDonald had a Farm,

Kee-i-kee-i-ko!

(Or, you could just pick the first
sound in a child's name and only
switch the sounds in ee-i-ee-i-o)



Zip-a-Dee Doo Da!

Zip-a-dee-do-da, Zip-a-dee-
day!

My, oh my, what a wonderful
day!

Plenty of sunshine,

Coming our way,

Zip-a-dee-do-da, Zip-a-dee-
day!

(change to pip-a-dee-poo-
pa...kids love this one!

Or, kip-a-dee-koo-ka...they
love this one too!

La-La-La!

La La La La

La-la-la- La,la.

La-la-la La-la-la,

La, La, La!

(pick another sound and sing: e.g., "ta-ta-ta-ta...")

More Songs for Switching Sounds

If all the Raindrops were Lemondrops and Gumdrops

If all the raindrops were lemondrops and gumdrops,
Oh, what a rain it would be.

Standing outside with my mouth open wide,
Ah, ah, ah, ah, ah, ah, ah, ah, ah, ah.

If all the raindrops were lemondrops and gumdrops,
Oh, what a rain it would be.

Repeat, but add a new sound to "ah-ah-ah-ah..."
(e.g., pa,pa,pa,pa,pa,pa,pa,pa,pa,pa,pa)



I Like to Eat Apples and Bananas

I like to eat, eat, eat, apples and bananas.
I like to eat, eat, eat, apples and bananas.

I like to ate, ate, ate, ay-ples and
ba-nay-nays.

I like to ate, ate, ate, ay-ples and
ba-nay-nays.

I like to eat, eat, eat, ee-ples and
ba-nee-nees.

I like to eat, eat, eat, ee-ples and
ba-nee-nees.

I like to ight, ight, ight, igh-ples and
ba-nigh-nighs.

I like to ight, ight, ight, igh-ples and
ba-nigh-nighs.

I like to oat, oat, oat, oa-ples and
ba-no-nose.

I like to oat, oat, oat, oa-ples and
ba-no-nose.

I like to oot, oot, oot, oo-ples and
ba-noo-noos.

I like to oot, oot, oot, oo-ples and
ba-noo-noos.

Oh, Do You Know the Muffin Man?

Oh, Do You Know the Muffin Man?
(One child leaves the room while the others cover their eyes)

Oh do you know the muffin man,
The muffin man, the muffin man.
Oh do you know the muffin man,
Who lives on Drury Lane?

Oh, yes I know the muffin man,
The muffin man, the muffin man,
Oh yes I know the muffin man

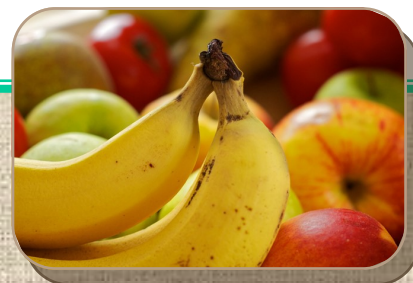
The muffin man is _____. (children guess who's gone)





Happy Birthday!


Gappy Girthday Goo Gew
Gappy Girthday Goo Gew
Gappy Girthday Geer
Gennifer
Gappy Girthday Goo Gew

(Choose any song and switch the first sound for *all* of the words)





Even More Songs
for Switching
Sounds




**John Jacob Jingle Heimer
Schmidt**

John Jacob Jingle Heimer Schmidt
His name is my name too.
Whenever we go out,
The people always shout,
There goes John Jacob Jingle Heimer Schmidt.
Da da da da da da da!
Repeat, but switch the first sound in “da-da-da...”

*This song is traditionally sung more quietly each time,
and then the “da-da-da” part is sung LOUDLY.

Kookaburra



Kookaburra sits in the old gum tree,
Merry, merry king of the bush is he-e.
Laugh, kookaburra, Laugh, kookaburra,
Gay your life must be, Ha-ha-ha!


Kookaburra sits in the old gum tree,
Eating all the gumdrops he can see-e.
Stop, kookaburra, Stop, kookaburra,
Leave some there for me, Ha-ha-ha!

Change “ha-ha-ha” to another sound.

Perhaps a vowel sound:
i.e.: “he-he-he”, or “hi-hi-hi”, “ho-ho-ho”, or “hoo-hoo-
hoo”)

Rig-a-Jig-Jig


(stand in circle & walk on the spot)



As I was walking down the street,
Down the street, down the street,
A very good friend I chanced to meet,
Hi-Ho, Hi-Ho, Hi-Ho!
(now everyone hold hands and walk in a
circle)
Rig-a-Jig-Jig and away we go,
Away we go, away we go,
Rig-a-Jig-Jig and away we go,
Hi-Ho, Hi-Ho, Hi-Ho!


(change Rig-a-Jig-Jig to the first sound in
someone’s name...i.e.: Melanie would sound
like:

Mig-a-Mig-Mig, and Sharon would sound
like:
Shig-a-Shig-Shig...)



We clapped our hands and stomped our feet,
Stomped our feet, stomped our feet...
We clapped our hands and stomped our feet,
Hi-Ho, Hi-Ho, Hi-Ho!

Repeat first verse with the following:
We jumped up high and way down low....
We kissed my ma, and hugged my pa...





Segmenting Song

The Wheels on the Bus (tune)

"The sounds in the word go:
/s/o/ck, /s/o/ck/, /s/o/ck/
The sounds in the word go: /s/o/ck/.
Who knows the word?"



If You're Happy and You Know It (tune)

If you think you know this word, shout it out!
If you think you know this word, shout it out!
If you think you know this word, then tell me what
you've heard,
If you think you know this word, shout it out!

Then break down a word into its syllables or sounds:

(i.e.: "/ap/ple/sauce/", "/um/brel/a/", "/la/dy/bug)

(i.e.: "/sn/a/p/", "/s/t/ar/", "/t/ee/th"/) and see if
they can guess the word before you are done.

Or:

"If your name begins with __, stand up tall!
(or "turn around")

If your name begins with __, stand up tall!

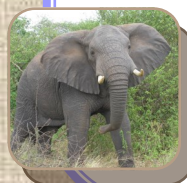
If your name begins with __, then stand up by the wall,
(or, "turn & touch the ground")

If your name begins with __, stand up tall!"

Blending Songs

Willoby, Walloby

Willoby, Walloby W(erry),
An elephant sat on Sherry
Willoby, Walloby W(all)
An elephant sat on Paul!
Willoby, Walloby W(acky),
An elephant sat on Jackie
Willoby, Walloby W(onathan)
An elephant sat on Jonathan!



Rhyming Song

Down By the Bay (Raffi)

Down by the Bay...Where the watermelons
grow....

Back to my home...I dare not go...

For if I do...My mother will say....

Have you ever seen a:

-Goose, kissing a Moose

(can your children fill in the rhyming word?)

-Whale, with a Polka-dot Tail

-Fly, wearing a Tie

-Bear, combing his Hair

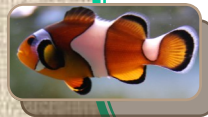
- _____ (have children make up their own)

Down by the Bay!

Songs for Counting

One, Two, Buckle My Shoe

One, two, buckle my shoe,
Three, four, knock on the door.
Five, six, pick up sticks,
Seven, eight, lay them straight.
Nine, ten, a big fat hen!



1,2,3,4,5

Once I Caught a Fish Alive

One, two, three, four, five,
Once I caught a fish alive,
Six, seven, eight, nine, ten...
Then I let him go again!
Why did you let him go?
Because he bit my finger so!
Which little finger did he bite?
This little finger on the right!

Five Little Ducks

Five little ducks went out to play,
Over the hills and far away,
Mother duck said, "quack, quack, quack, quack"
But only four little ducks came back.
Four little ducks went out to play, etc.,,



Five Little Monkeys

Five little monkeys jumping on the bed,
One fell off and bumped his head.
Mother called the doctor,
And the doctor said,
No more monkeys jumping on the bed!
Four little monkeys...etc.


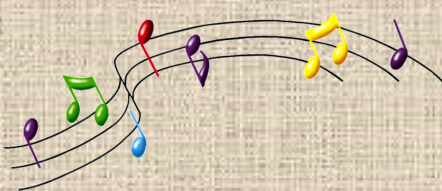


The Ants Go Marching

The ants go marching one by one, Hoorah! Hoorah!
The ants go marching one by one, Hoorah! Hoorah!
The ants go marching one by one,
The little one stopped to suck his thumb,
And they all went marching down, to the ground, to
get out of the rain,
Boom, boom, boom!

The ants go marching two by two...tie his shoe
The ants go marching three by three...climb a tree
The ants go marching four by four...shut the door
The ants go marching five by five...take a dive
The ants go marching six by six...pick up sticks
The ants go marching seven by seven...look up to
heaven
The ants go marching eight by eight...lock the gate
The ants go marching nine by nine...pick up a dime
The ants go marching ten by ten...write with a pen,
And they all went marching down, around the town
Boom, boom, boom!





Songs for Clapping & Skipping

Miss Mary Mack

Miss Mary mack, mack, mack,
All dressed in black, black, black,
With silver buttons, buttons, buttons,
All down her back, back, back.

She asked her mother, mother, mother
For 50 cents, cents, cents,
To see the elephant, elephant, elephant
Jump over the fence, fence, fence.

He jumped so high, high, high,
He reached the sky, sky, sky,
And didn't come back, back, back,
Till the FIRST of July-ly-ly-ly!



See-see my playmate

See-see my playmate,
Come out and play with me.
And bring your dollies three,
Climb up my apple tree.

Shout down my rain barrel,
Slide down my cellar door.
And we'll be jolly friends,
Forever more...more...more...more...more!

See-see my playmate,
I cannot play with you,
My dolly's got the flu,
Boo-hoo-hoo-hoo-hoo-hoo.
Ain't got no rain barrel,
Ain't got no cellar door,
But we'll be jolly friends,
Forever more, more, more, more, more!

Three Sailors went to Sea, Sea, Sea

Three sailors went to sea, sea,
sea,

To see what they could see,
see, see.

But all that they could see,
see, see,

Was the bottom of the deep
blue sea, sea, sea!

Pat-a-cake

Pat-a-cake, pat-a-cake, Baker's
Man.

Bake me a cake as fast as you can.

Pat it. And roll it. And mark it with
a /k/ (say first sound in child's
name)

And put it in the oven for
(Christopher) and me.

Miss Polly

Miss Polly had a dolly who was sick, sick, sick.
So she called for the doctor to come quick, quick, quick.
The doctor came with a bag and a hat,
And knocked on the door with a rat-tat-tat.

Looked at the dolly and shook his head.
And said, "Miss Polly, put her straight to bed".
He wrote out a paper for a pill, pill, pill,
Said, "that'll make her better yes it will, will, will!"

Peas Porridge Hot

Peas porridge hot. Peas porridge cold.
Peas porridge in the pot, nine days old.
Some like it hot. Some like it cold.
And some like it in the pot, nine days old.

Use More Interesting Words!



High Five!

Children who learn at least 5 new words per day have an easier time understanding what they read later on in grade 3 and beyond.

Strive to help your children learn five new words per day! Use words from children's books. Repeat the words over & over, and try to get your children to say them too!



Resist using "this", "that", & "thing"!

Resist saying, "Wow! Look at THIS!" or "Hey! Look at THAT!" or "IT'S over there."

Instead, use descriptive words, action words (verbs), and location words: "Wow! Look at the tiny striped caterpillar". Or, "Hey! The caterpillar is wriggling his way up the stem!" Or, "The cocoon is UNDER the pointy leaf."

Explain Things!

STOP when reading a book that has an interesting word or phrase in it (like "delicate", or "tip of the iceberg") and explain it using your voice, your hands, or by just describing what it means.



Label things that your children are looking at!

For example, say: "We call this a "wrench".

Note: Pay attention to what is interesting to your child (not just to what is interesting to you and label these things).

Be specific when explaining and describing things for your children!

Instead of saying 'milk comes from cows', you could say that the cow has an udder, and we squeeze the milk from the udder into a pail so we can drink it!

Focus on Your Child's Interests!

Help your children learn new words by noticing what grabs their attention! Once you figure out what is sparking your children's curiosity, look it up in a book or online, and explain and describe new words that you read!



Use "Juicy" Words!

Don't shy away from using words you think are over your child's head! Instead, use them as part of your natural conversation and children will gradually pick up on their meanings. Before you know it, they'll be saying that their pasta is "scrumptious!"

Use more Interesting Words!

What do we all normally say to our children when we see a picture of a lion? Right! LION! The lion goes "ROAR!" Think about 10 OTHER things that you could say about a lion! (he has a "mane", he lives in Africa, he has sharp "FANGS")

Pretend with Me!



Pretend with Me!

Pretending helps me develop my imagination so that I will be confident in my ability to solve problems later on. Einstein said, "Imagination is more important than Knowledge".

What happens to books after grade 2?

Why would pretending and having a good imagination & a strong mind's eye help your child read later on (past grade 3)?

RIGHT! No pictures. They will eventually have to read "chapter" books later on, so PRETEND with your children & help them develop a strong mind's eye this weekend!

Pretend using Symbols!

Can your children use simple objects to stand for real objects when playing? Like using a broom for a horse, or a paper towel roll as a fire hose? This helps them learn to use things as symbols for other things – the same thing they will need when learning to read! They need to understand that letters are symbols that represent sounds we make when we speak!



Pretend for Me!

Get down at your child's eye level and talk to your child as if you were talking to their "character"... (e.g., Oh Doctor! My baby isn't feeling well. Maybe you should check her ears and throat?)

Blocks are a GREAT place to pretend play!

Bring in other things like three little pigs and build houses out of bricks, sticks, or straw. Or, bring little plastic people in and act out a familiar story or event (like The Three Bears), or just follow your child's lead and let them tell you what to say with the characters.



Figure out what "Pretend Play" stage your children are at!

Role model the next stage for them. It's fun to look closely at how they play – take your time observing what they're doing.

Watching them first makes it easier to join in!

At the Beginning!

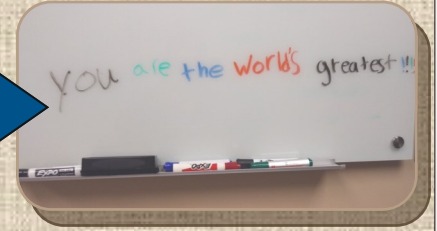
When pretending with your children, begin with realistic props – like a farm set, or a set of pretend dishes. But once they get older, encourage them to substitute other objects to stand for the real thing (like using BLOCKS to build the farm).



Take your Children Places!

Every time you take your children to the store, doctor, dentist, hairdresser, restaurant, library, or zoo (for example), PRETEND this experience with them when you get home. They will LOVE you for doing this!

Play with Sounds and Letters!



“I Hear with My Little Ear, the very first sound in...” !

At first, use words that have sounds that can be drawn out like /mmmmmpop/ and /nnnnnnnap/. If this is easy, then move on to sounds that are cut off, like /k/ and /b/. Get face-to-face so they can see how you are making the sounds.

When Hanging Out in the Kitchen...

Start whispering slowly, ‘p-p-p-p-pickles!’ ‘p-p-p-p-pizza’, ‘p-p-p-p-p-pancakes!’

Can your child take a turn?

Resist adding ‘uh’ onto the end of the sound: For example, say /t/ rather than /tuh/, and /mmmm/ rather than /muh/!



Get a white board! !

Put it in your kitchen. Make notes for your children. Draw simple pictures (whatever your child asks for), & then model listening for the first sound in the word. Print the first sound & say the sound at the same time that you print it. Then keep drawing! Make it fun, not work!

Put Magnetic Letters on your Fridge!

Put the letters in order & point to them while you sing the song. Make it a game by stopping at a sound & tricking the person who is singing into continuing to sing. Have your child point while YOU sing, and when they stop on a letter, keep singing by mistake!



Play with Syllables!

Play, “I hear with my little ear, something that sounds like: /um/brel/la/”. Or, “/por/cu/pine/”.

Can your child hear what the word is just by listening to each syllable separately? If this is difficult at first, then blend the sounds together a bit like this: “ummmmbrelll-a”.

Blend Individual Sounds!

After your children can blend syllables into a word (e.g., /ap/ple/sauce/ = applesauce!), and after they can easily tell you the first sound in any word, then play with individual sounds like this: “I hear with my little ear, something that sounds like: /s/t/ar/. Or, /p/ea/ch/. Leave silence between the sounds. If this is too difficult, then blend some of the sounds together for them.



Print your child’s name often!

The secret here is to do it IN FRONT OF THEM. This is how you role model the alphabetic principle that the words we say have sounds, and that these sounds can be put on paper by using little squiggly lines (letters!). So say the sounds in their name as you print the letters, then say, “We call this the letter ‘em’”. (for /m/).

Use Sensory Materials!

Put letters and objects in a tray with sand, crinkle paper or “magic mud”. Find matching objects and sounds.

For example, say /mmmm/ and mitten.

MAGIC MUD:

- Put up to one box of corn starch in a bowl and add enough coloured water to be able to stir it
- The more water added the thinner the mud will be
- You may explore it in a zip lock bag or on a smooth surface

Why Make Playdough for Me?

Why Make Play Dough for Me?

- ⇒ Because I LOVE it! It's so much fun!
- ⇒ It's a great way to pretend so that I learn to use symbols, my imagination, and speak in longer and more complex sentences.
- ⇒ It stimulates my imagination.
- ⇒ It develops all of the small muscles in my little hands.
- ⇒ It stimulates all of my senses at the same time, making it easy to learn concepts like colours, textures, shapes, above, below, beside, between.



Put the Cookie Cutters Away!

- ⇒ Use your imagination to create snakes that talk, snowmen that walk, and parks and islands that rock! Help me grow my imagination!
- ⇒ Limit use of cookie cutters so that I focus on imaginative play.
- ⇒ Offer materials such as rocks, popsicle sticks, pipe cleaners, shells, etc. I can then explore these materials with my playdough and CREATE something using my imagination!
- ⇒ Build nursery rhyme settings and characters and sing or say nursery rhymes!



What is a Good Play Dough Recipe?

Mix: 2½ cups flour

½ cup salt

3 tbsp. Cream of Tarter

Then Mix: 2 cups boiling water

3 tbsp. oil






food colouring

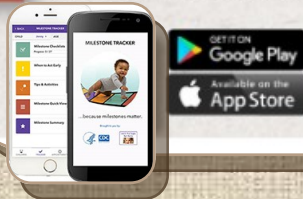


Monitoring your Child's Development

Try CDC's FREE Milestone Tracker app today...

Because milestones matter!

-  Illustrated milestone checklists for 2 months through 5 years
-  Summary of your child's milestones to share
-  Activities to help your child's development
-  Tips for what to do if you become concerned
-  Reminders for appointments and developmental screening



Or refer to the following website to access milestones from your computer:

<https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/milestones/>

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checklist@ndds

shop checklist about contact  

LET'S GO



**new name.
new look.
same checklist.**

To celebrate 25 years of helping children worldwide reach their developmental potential, we've given our classic easy-to-use checklist a new parent-friendly name and look!

LEARN MORE

- ⇒ **13 checklists ranging from 1 & 2 months to 6 years of age**
- ⇒ **Available in 5 languages: English, French, Spanish, Vietnamese, Chinese**

<https://www.lookseechecklist.com/en/>

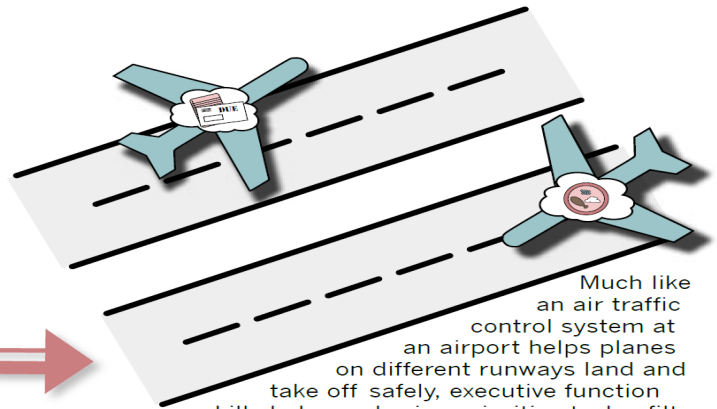
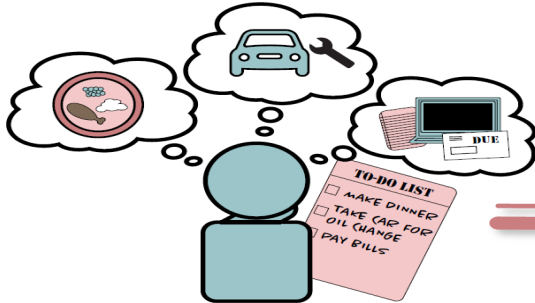


<https://empowersimcoe.ca/early-literacy/>

WHAT IS EXECUTIVE FUNCTION?

AND HOW DOES IT RELATE TO CHILD DEVELOPMENT?

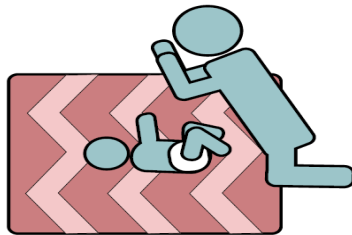
The phrase “executive function” refers to a set of skills. These skills underlie the capacity to plan ahead and meet goals, display self-control, follow multiple-step directions even when interrupted, and stay focused despite distractions, among others.



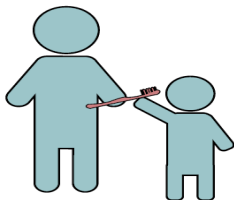
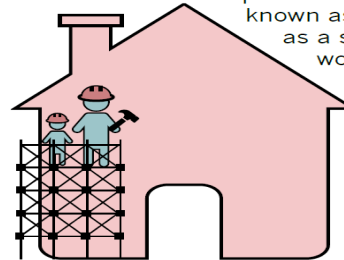
Much like an air traffic control system at an airport helps planes on different runways land and take off safely, executive function skills help our brains prioritize tasks, filter distractions, and control impulses.

NO ONE IS BORN WITH EXECUTIVE FUNCTION SKILLS, BUT NEARLY EVERYONE CAN LEARN THEM.

Our genes provide the blueprint for learning these skills, but they develop through experiences and practice. The foundation is laid in infancy, when babies first learn to pay attention. Relationships with responsive caregivers are particularly important at this stage. Something as simple as playing a game of peekaboo can help build the early foundations of working memory and self-control as a baby anticipates the surprise.

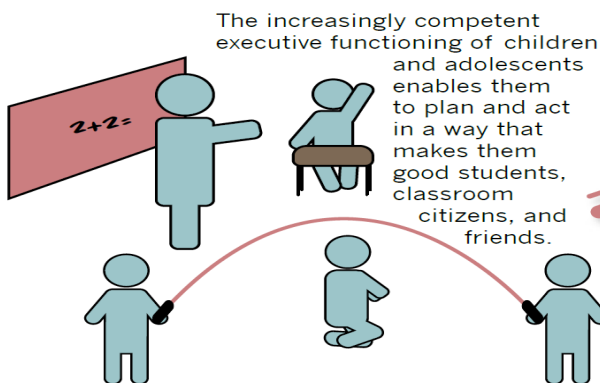


Adults set up the framework for children to learn and practice these skills over time by establishing routines, breaking big tasks into smaller chunks, and encouraging games that promote imagination, role-playing, following rules, and controlling impulses. These techniques are known as “scaffolding.” Just as a scaffold supports workers while a building is being constructed, adults can use these activities to support the emergence of children’s executive function skills until they can perform them on their own.

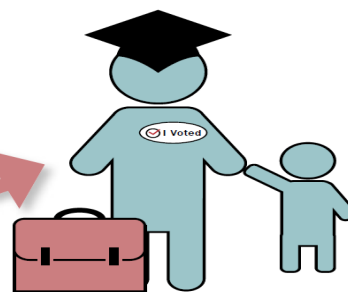


These skills typically develop most rapidly between ages 3-5, followed by another spike in development during the adolescent and early adult years. It takes a long time and a lot of practice to develop them, but, as children’s executive function skills grow, adults can gradually allow children to manage more and more aspects of their environment.

BUILDING CHILDREN’S EXECUTIVE FUNCTION SKILLS BENEFITS EVERYONE.



The increasingly competent executive functioning of children and adolescents enables them to plan and act in a way that makes them good students, classroom citizens, and friends.



In turn, this helps them grow into adults capable of juggling a multitude of commitments, such as parenting, employment, continuing education, and civic involvement. Even health is affected, as strong executive function helps people stick to healthy habits

and reduce stress. The more a society invests in building the executive functioning of its children, the greater dividends it will see in the future.

Executive Function Activities for 3- to 5-year-olds

Children’s executive function and self-regulation skills grow at a fast pace during this period, so it is important to adapt activities to match the skills of each child. Younger children need a lot of support in learning rules and structures, while older children can be more independent. Ultimately, the goal is to shift children away from relying on adult regulation, so when the child seems ready, try to reduce the support you provide.



Imaginary play

During intentional imaginary play, children develop rules to guide their actions in playing roles. They also hold complex ideas in mind and shape their actions to follow these rules, inhibiting impulses or actions that don’t fit the “role.” Players often take ideas from their own lives, such as going to the doctor’s office. They might act “sick,” be examined by the doctor, and receive a shot. The “doctor” talks and acts like a doctor (calm and reassuring), the “sick child” talks and acts like a sick child (sad and scared), and the child in the role of “parent” talks and acts like a concerned parent (worried and caring). While younger children tend to play alone or in parallel, children in this age range are learning to play cooperatively and often regulate each other’s behavior—an important step in developing self-regulation.

Ways to support high-level imaginary play:

- **Read books, go on field trips, and use videos** to make sure that children know enough about the scenario and roles to support pretend play.
- **Provide a varied set of props and toys** to encourage this type of play. Younger pre-schoolers may need more realistic props to get the play started (e.g., toy medical kits), while

older children can re-purpose other things to turn them into play props (e.g., paper towel tube that is used as a cast for a “broken arm”). Reusing familiar objects in a new way also practices cognitive flexibility.

- **Allow children to make their own play props.** Children must determine what is needed, hold this information in mind, and then follow through without getting distracted. They also exercise selective attention, working memory, and planning. If the original plans don’t work out, children need to adjust their ideas and try again, challenging their cognitive flexibility.
- **Play plans can be a good way to organize play,** as shown by one early education program designed to build self-regulation, Tools of the Mind. Children decide who they are going to be and what they are going to do before they start playing, and then draw their plan on paper. Planning means that children think first and then act, thus practicing inhibitory control. Planning play in a group also encourages children to plan together, hold these plans in mind, and apply them during the activity. It encourages social problem solving, as well as oral language.

Storytelling

Children love to tell stories. Their early stories tend to be a series of events, each one related to the one before, but lacking any larger structure. With practice, children develop more complex and organized plots. As the complexity of the storytelling grows, children practice holding and manipulating information in working memory.

Ways to support children’s storytelling:

- **Encourage children to tell you stories,** and write them down to read with the child. Children can also make pictures and create their own books. Revisiting the story, either by reviewing pictures or words, supports more intentional organization and greater elaboration.

continued

■ **Tell group stories.** One child starts the story, and each person in the group adds something to it. Children need to pay attention to each other, reflect on possible plot twists, and tailor their additions to fit the plot, thereby challenging their attention, working memory, and self-control.

■ **Have children act out stories** they have written. The story provides a structure that guides

children’s actions and requires them to attend to the story and follow it, while inhibiting their impulse to create a new plot.

■ **Bilingual families can tell stories in their home language.** Research indicates that bilingualism can benefit a variety of executive function skills in children of all ages, so fostering fluency in a second language is valuable.

Movement challenges: songs and games

The demands of songs and movement games support executive function because children have to move to a specific rhythm and synchronize words to actions and the music. All of these tasks contribute to inhibitory control and working memory. It is important that these songs and games become increasingly complex to interest and challenge children as they develop more self-regulation skills.

■ **Provide many opportunities** for children to test themselves physically through access to materials such as climbing structures, balance beams, seesaws, etc. Setting challenges for children—such as obstacle courses and games that encourage complex motions (skipping, balancing, etc.)—can also be fun. When children are trying new and difficult activities, they need to focus attention, monitor and adjust their actions, and persist to achieve a goal.

■ **Encourage attention control through quieter activities** that require children to reduce stimu-

lation and focus attention—such as using a balance beam or yoga poses that include slow breathing.

■ **Play some music** and have children dance really fast, then really slowly. *Freeze dance* is also fun, and it can be made more difficult by asking children to freeze in particular positions. (Tools of the Mind uses stick-figure pictures to direct children.) When the music stops, children must inhibit action and shift their attention to the picture to imitate the shape depicted.

■ **Songs that repeat and add on** to earlier sections (either through words or motions) are a great challenge to working memory, such as the motions to *She’ll Be Coming ’Round the Mountain*, the words to *Bought Me a Cat*, and backward-counting songs, such as *Five Green and Speckled Frogs* and songs repeating a long list (the *Alphabet Song*).

■ **Traditional song games**, like *Circle ’Round the Zero* are also fun. Complex actions, including finding partners, must be accomplished without becoming distracted.

Quiet games and other activities

■ **Matching and sorting activities** are still fun, but now children can be asked to sort by different rules, promoting cognitive flexibility. Children can first sort or match by one rule (such as by color), and then immediately switch to a new rule (such as by shape). For a more challenging version, play a matching game, but change the rule for each pair. *Quirkle* and *S’Match* are commercially available games that challenge cognitive flexibility in this way. Or play a bingo or lotto game, in which children have to mark a card with the opposite of what is called out

by the leader (e.g., for “day,” putting a chip on a nighttime picture). Children have to inhibit the tendency to mark the picture that matches, while also remembering the game’s rule.

■ **Increasingly complicated puzzles** can engage children this age, exercising their visual working memory and planning skills.

■ **Cooking is also a lot of fun** for young children. They practice inhibition when waiting for instructions, working memory while holding complicated directions in mind, and focused attention when measuring and counting.

Resources

Pretend play suggestions

■ www.mindinthemaking.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/PFL-4-year-old-independent-play.pdf

Montessori activities – Walking on the line

■ www.infomontessori.com/practical-life/control-of-movement-walking-on-the-line.htm

Songs

■ kids.niehs.nih.gov/games/songs/childrens/index.htm

How Does Learning Happen?

Parents and teachers are no longer considered simply the “keepers of the knowledge that must be imparted on children”.

Instead, we plan, join in, and make a **connection** with children (which is far more fun!), taking a curious approach to what they think and do, rather than acting as the “experts” who must “correct” and “direct” all of their learning and behaviour.

Effective programs are planned intentionally to nurture language and literacy through play and thoughtful questions that search for, build on, value, and respect the unique perspectives and experiences of children and their families.



Not only do we need to pay attention to children’s development socially, emotionally, physically, and intellectually, but we must also consider the **creative, aesthetic, and spiritual** sides of their experience.

BELONGING

We all learn best when we feel seen, heard, safe, and connected to others, when we are valued as having our own unique perspective, and when our contributions are appreciated.

WELL-BEING

We learn better when we feel physically healthy, safe, able to take care of ourselves, and able to deal with stress and recover.

ENGAGEMENT

We learn best when we are given environments & experiences that captivate our attention –through relationships with people who help us explore ideas, investigate our theories, and interact with others in play.

EXPRESSION

We all learn best when we can express ourselves effectively in different ways...through our bodies, with materials, and/or with words.

Adapted from: Government of Ontario, Ministry of Education. (2014). *How Does Learning Happen? Ontario’s Pedagogy for the Early Years*. Toronto: Queen’s Printer for Ontario.

The Joy of Printing Letters!

1

Get the whole arm moving! Use your first two fingers to make big circles on the carpet (that start at the top and circle to the left), and to make lines that go from the top to the bottom of the space.

2

Use the first two fingers to trace (there is more sensory input this way).

3

Trace letters on a rough surface (e.g., in sand/salt in a pie plate, on a carpet).

4

Put a thin layer of salt, or sand or chocolate pudding from a pudding cup in the bottom of a pie plate or flat plastic food container and draw letters (always start at the top, and come down – make lowercase letters).



5

Say the **letter SOUND** while printing it.

6

Say the **letter NAME** while printing it.

7

Say a “key word” (e.g., for “s”, this might be “sun”) while printing it.

8

Trace in multisensory places like on a steamy mirror or shower door after a shower, a dirty car window, a frosty car window or door, chalk on sidewalk, on each other’s backs, on each other’s hands, in the air, in shaving cream or foam soap in the bathtub.

9

Print FOR your child to help them understand how much fun it is to print:

- Print a ‘title’ on what they draw (ask them what their picture is ‘called’).
- Say the sounds of the letters that you are printing while you print.
- Make notes/lists for yourself (a white board in the kitchen works well) and say the sounds as you print.
- Print a story FOR your children (or type it on the computer) while they make it up. Help them create a beginning, middle, & end.
- Make up a Scavenger Hunt with little notes around the house or yard (Look under the ____, Look in the ____, and then leave a little treat at the end).



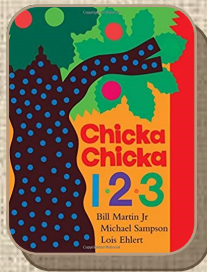
Numeracy

Like early literacy, **early numeracy skills**, are an important element of school readiness. What families do naturally every day, such as sorting laundry, counting fingers and establishing predictable daily routines for bed, bath, meal and play times are preparing your preschooler for future math success.

Play, read, sing and talk to help your preschooler develop early numeracy skills!

PLAY

- Fill and dump containers with sand, water and rocks
- Create patterns using toys or natural materials
- Match and sort objects by shape, size or color
- Build obstacle course
- Play dice games
- Go on a shape walk



READ

- Chicka Chicka 1, 2, 3 By Bill Martin
- The Napping House By Audrey Wood
- Bear Counts By Karma Wilson
- Off to See The World By Eric Carle
- Max Found Two Sticks By Brian Pinkney

TALK

- Count everything
- Ask how many do we have if we add one more?
- Describe amounts with numbers or words like "more" or "a lot."
- Label positions – up, down, over, under, beside, behind, left, right
- Label giant, tiny, full, empty, wide, light, heavy
- Describe shape, size and distance when exploring



SING

- Five Little Monkeys
- 1,2,3,4,5 Once I Caught a Fish Alive
- The Ants Go Marching
- Alice the Camel
- This Old Man

Ages & Stages of Numeracy Development

3–4 years old

- When counting objects, knows that the last number word spoken answers the question “how many are there?”
 - By the age of three and a half, reliably gives correct answers to addition and subtraction problems involving small quantities, for example $1 + 2$ and $3 - 2$, by using concrete objects (manipulatives) or by pointing to a picture of the correct answer; for example, when given $\square \square$ joined to \square , can point to $\square \square \square$.
 - Knows that a pile of sand should look bigger when more sand has been added to it.
 - Recognizes one-digit numbers.
 - Can share ten toys equally among five children and knows that each child has an equal share.
 - Can learn to count from 1 to 30.
 - Measures length by directly comparing two objects, for example, “This book is as long as my arm.”
 - Represents 5 using a finger pattern.
- (www.qualitychildcarecanada.ca. © CCCF 2009)

For playful age specific activities—as well as videos, information, and more go to:

<https://www.zerotothree.org/resources/series/let-s-talk-about-math-early-math-video-series>

Everyday Fun with Addition and Subtraction

Everyday Fun with Counting

Everyday Fun with Spatial Awareness

Have Fun with Math: Playful Parent-Child Shape Activities

Parent-Child Activities That Support Pattern Learning

Everyday Fun with Measurement

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

Building Blocks for Reading Success



Reading Aloud

Reading aloud brings the whole world to your children! It's not just about reading the books – it's about the conversations you have about the people (and why they feel or behave the way they do), places and things in the books. It's great quality time too – time your children will remember forever.

Singing

Babies sing to themselves when they are happy. Singing releases endorphins & makes you feel energized & uplifted (unless someone teases you about your voice!). Singing makes it easier to remember, and easier to pay attention.

Rhyming

Being able to rhyme is the first skill children will need to be able to sound out words later on. It's the first step in learning that words are made up of individual sounds. Be direct when explaining...“Hey! Cat...Hat! Those words rhyme! They both sound like “at” at the end!”

Drawing & Scribbling

This is the first step toward printing letters. If you print words (or even just the 1st letter of the word) for your children's pictures (and for your own pictures too!), they'll begin to learn that putting our thoughts down on paper makes them permanent! And then they'll want to know more about letters!

Pretending

Pretending helps your children develop their mind's eye – something that they will need to use when reading books without pictures later on. Too much screen time gets in the way of a good imagination!

Building Vocabulary

Children must know a LOT of words to be able to understand what they read later on. Children's books have 50% more rare or unique words in them than does the conversation of most university graduates.

Building Speaking Skills

Having good conversations helps children learn to speak in complete sentences, use more complex grammar, and use more interesting words. All of this makes reading easier later on.

Playing with Syllables, Sounds, & Letters

Children must be able to hear all of the individual sounds in words to be able to sound out words later on. Play sound games like: “I hear with my little ear... the very first sound in __.” Or, “...something that sounds like: /um/brel/la”, & eventually, (by the end of SK), “something that sounds like: /s//t//ar/.”

Go to the Library!



“The more that you read, the more things you will know. The more that you learn, the more places you'll go.” -Dr. Seuss



YOU CAN FIND
MAGIC
wherever you look,
SIT BACK AND RELAX,
ALL YOU NEED IS
A BOOK
-Dr. Seuss



- If you want to stay motivated to read aloud with your children, be sure to go to the library regularly!
- Choose ten books that you want to read with your children, and let them pick out their own ten books.
- Keep all of your library books in a special bin.
- Come bedtime, you will be MUCH more enthusiastic about reading aloud because you will have some NEW and interesting books to choose from!
- Children's books have 50% more rare or unique words in them than does the regular conversation of two university graduates. Stop often to explain and describe new words, and your children will develop a vocabulary to last a lifetime!
- It's not just the book you read, it's the conversations you have while reading that really make a difference!
- The library has a program called, Every Child Ready to Read. This program demonstrates how caregivers can develop language and pre-reading skills in their children from birth to age five by simply talking, singing, reading, writing, and playing together.

Reading Tips in Spanish, Arabic, Chinese, Haitian Creole, Hmong, Korean, Diné, Russian, Tagalog, and Vietnamese:
<http://www.readingrockets.org/article/reading-tips-parents-11-languages>

Food Pyramid for Kids' Media Consumption

<https://www.wired.com/story/kids-screen-time-pyramid/>

Although screen time before the age of 2 is not recommended, take a look at this visual below...it's useful information to keep in mind down the road!



1. USE SPARINGLY

Screens Before Bed

Cortisol-spiking content and melatonin-suppressing blue light impair sleep.

Background TV

This reduces the number of words adults utter, potentially stunting children's language development.

Screens During Mealtime

The habit is linked to overeating as well as delayed social and language skills, due to missing out on family conversations.

2. USE OCCASIONALLY

YouTube

To reduce the risk of children stumbling onto inappropriate content, turn Autoplay off and Restricted Mode on.

First-Person Shooter Videogames

While violent media is linked to aggression, boys who abstain from videogames report more social isolation.

Social Media

Most teens say social media helps them feel more connected to friends, although heavy use has been linked to depression and anxiety. Apps like RescueTime can help kids reflect on their screen use.

3. USE MODERATELY

Interactive Ebooks

Ebooks with lots of bells and whistles tend to reduce comprehension but may help children who would otherwise lose interest.

Movies/TV

For age-appropriate content, consult independent review sites like Common Sense Media.

Active TV/Video

Shows like The Wiggles and YouTube channels like Kidz Bop encourage children to dance.

Active Videogames

Older exergaming consoles like Wii and Kinect, and newer games like Beat Saber and Rec Room, can help children break a sweat.

4. USE FREELY

Video Chats With Family

While children age 2 and under have a poor ability to learn from 2D sources, Pediatricians approve of video chats starting at 18 months.

Stages of Play, Language, and Literacy Development

	Pretend Play Development	Language Development	Literacy Development
3 to 5 years	<p>Planned Pretend Play: (4 -5 year olds)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -dramatic play in groups -person-oriented, not object-oriented -role playing using make believe objects -lots of language to create actions or situations "Let's pretend that____" -will "act" for at least 10 minutes -very creative and inventive 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -understands directions involving "if... then" -"if you're wearing runners then line up for gym" -is understood by strangers most of the time -speaks in complete sentences (using some details), & links two sentences with "and" -grammar becomes complex (<i>not</i> "me do it") - describes past, present and future events in detail -uses new, and more interesting words every day (when speaking) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -books that play with silly sounds & words (like Dr. Seuss' 'There's a Wocket in my Pocket') -reads a book by memorization or by making up the story (pretending) -recites & can make up rhymes -tells beginning, middle, & end of story when book is over using pictures for help -holds a pencil and uses it to print first name and letters (at random)
4 to 6 years	<p>Planned Pretend Play: (5-6 year olds)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -acts out stories that have a beginning, middle, and end for long periods of time -plays in roles of characters who come together to solve a problem -enjoys using objects that are abstract and open-ended -learns to coordinate with others -learns to solve problems so that play can continue -learns to follow the rules of conversation -begins to see things from another person's (the role they are playing) point of view -children whose parents take them to stores, parks, museums, workplaces, and other outings are able to play more creatively, and for longer periods of time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -uses complete sentences (with details, and interesting words) that sound almost like an adult because grammar dramatically improves -tells very long stories complete with endings -increase in vocabulary shown by using new, and more interesting words every day (when speaking) -says the beginning & ending sounds in words (orally – not in print – e.g., can answer the question: I hear with my little ear, the very first (or last) sound in "cake"! (Answer: <i>kl</i>, <i>not the name of the letter</i>) -blends three individual sounds into a word orally – not in print (e.g. can tell you what the word is when the sounds "p/ar/k" are given). -segments words into individual sounds orally – not in print (e.g., can break down the 3 sounds in the word 'star' like this: "s/t/ar"). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -loves listening to longer, make-believe stories with interesting plots (where characters solve a good problem with imagination) -tells the beginning, middle, & end of a story when book is over/closed - points to all letters & says their sounds - points to all letters & says their names -can point to the words in a simple story, matching the adult's spoken words -prints letters (in their full name, when trying to spell, & when copying) -sings the alphabet song and <i>points to matching letters when sung</i> -reads very simple pattern books (with memorization for simple "wild words"*, & sounding out – <i>with help</i> – for simple "pattern words"**) -understands what they read & what is read to them (by answering who, what, where, when, & why questions, & making good comments)

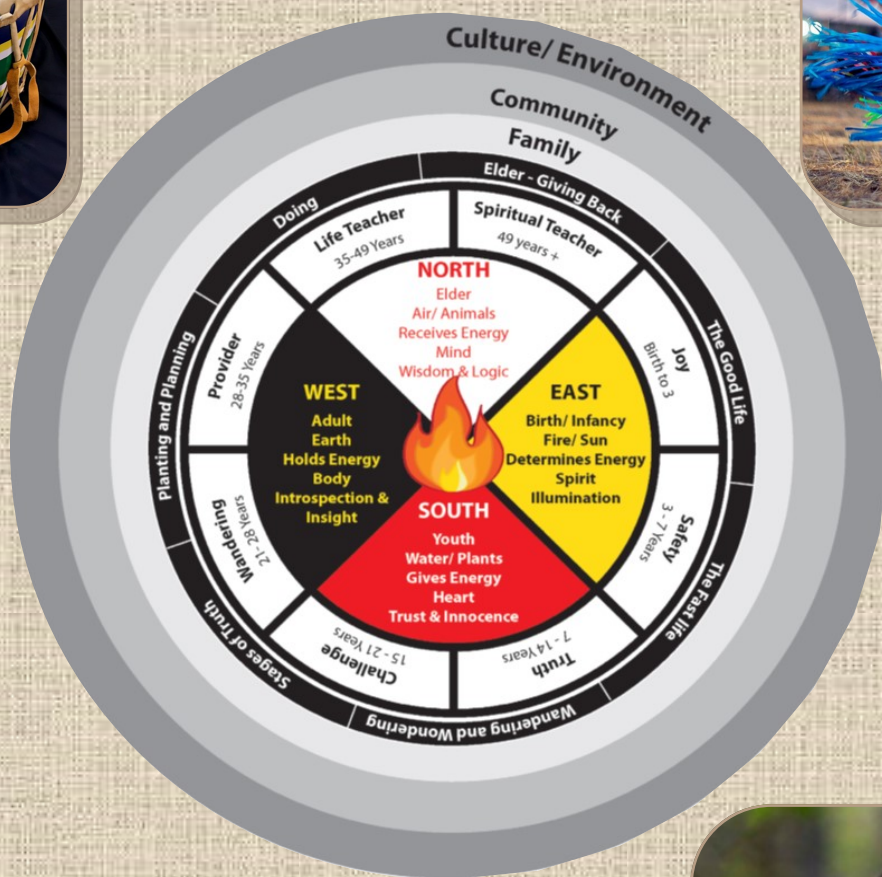
*Wild Words are words that must be memorized because their letters do not match the sounds (i.e.: of, the, was, very, could, etc...)

**Pattern Words are words that can be sounded out because the letter (or two letters together) matches the sound (i.e.: cat, sit, feet, shop)

A Bit About Being Indigenous

“There are three categories of Indigenous peoples in Canada: Inuit, Métis and First Nations. The Inuit primarily inhabit the northern regions of Canada. Their homeland, known as Inuit Nunangat, includes much of the land, water and ice contained in the Arctic region. Métis peoples are of mixed European and Indigenous ancestry, and live mostly in the Prairie Provinces and Ontario, but also in other parts of the country. First Nations peoples were the original inhabitants of the land that is now Canada, often occupying territories south of the Arctic.”

(Filice, Michelle; October 12, 2018; <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/aboriginal-people>)



Key Messages

1 First Nations, Inuit, and Métis cultures have long passed on knowledge from generation to generation through oral traditions, including storytelling. Storytelling is a traditional method used to teach about cultural beliefs, values, customs, rituals, history, practices, relationships, and ways of life. First Nations storytelling is a foundation for holistic learning, relationship building, and experiential learning.

2 “The Medicine Wheel, sometimes known as the Sacred Hoop or Sacred Circle, has been used by generations of various Native American tribes and First Nations in Canada for health and healing and as a tool for learning and teaching.” (Beaulieu, Kelly J.; The Seven Lessons of the Medicine Wheel <https://saymag.com/the-seven-lessons-of-the-medicine-wheel/>)

“As we journey through these seven stages we are also journeying through the life cycle, growing and learning along the way, understanding more about ourselves, and connecting more to our life’s purpose that was given by the Creator before birth. The seven stages of life are often described as:

The Good Life

The Fast Life

The Wandering and Wondering Life

The Stages of Truth

(Nurturing the Seed p.33 © Infant Mental Health Promotion (IMHP), 2017, rev. 2019)



3 “Powwows are celebrations that showcase Indigenous music, dances, regalia, food and crafts. Commonly hosted by First Nations communities (either on reserve or in urban settings), powwows are often open to non-Indigenous and Métis and Inuit peoples alike. Contemporary powwows originated on the Great Plains during the late 19th century and, since the 1950s, have been growing in size, number and popularity. Powwows serve an important role in many Indigenous peoples’ lives as a forum to visit family and friends, and to celebrate their cultural heritage, while also serving as a site for cross-cultural sharing with other attendees and participants. Indeed, powwows provide the opportunity for visitors to learn about, and increase their awareness of, traditional and contemporary Indigenous life and culture.”

(Filice,Michelle; October 15, 2018; <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/powwows-editorial>)

4 “There are a number of ways in which children may participate in their culture”.....these are some ways:

- mechanisms of cultural structure such as beliefs, rituals, customs, traditions, and ceremonies which are also “value” based language and communication patterns
- family orientations
- healing beliefs and practices
- religion
- art, dance, and music
- diet and food
- recreation
- clothing – regalia, moss bag
- history
- social status
- social group interactions



(Nurturing the Seed 26 © Infant Mental Health Promotion (IMHP), 2017, rev 2019)



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