



FIRST YEAR AT SCHOOL

SUPPORTING LITERACY AT HOME

Literacy is about using language in everyday situations. From birth, children are learning the spoken language of their family and culture. As they see people around them reading and writing for pleasure and information, they are learning the purposes of literacy in the world.

When you sing songs, play games and have interesting conversations with your child you are developing their literacy skills. When you read stories to them, you are adding rich storybook language to their collection of words.

Ready for literacy at school

When children are beginning school, it gives them a good start if they can:

- name some letters of the alphabet, beginning with important things such as their own name
- write some letters of the alphabet, not worrying at this stage about whether they use capital or lowercase letters
- talk about signs, symbols, letters and words that they see in the environment
- join in repeated sounds in rhymes, jingles, advertisements and stories—‘I’m a little teapot, short and stout, here is my handle, here is my spout ...’
- talk about their favourite books and authors and explain their preferences.



Things you can do to support children's literacy from birth ...

- sing songs, say jingles and play with words that rhyme—Jack Sprat could eat no fat ... Jodie Risch could eat no fish ...
- read storybooks, talking about what's happening and enjoying the sounds of special words—‘These are the leaves turning crimson and gold ...’
- listen to children as they share their experiences and their thinking
- talk, talk, talk—about what's happened, about why that happened, about what might happen
- don't ‘correct’ a child's grammar, just give the standard form in your reply—‘You ran down the hill fast, did you?’ (if the child said ‘runned’, for example)
- make familiar words together with plastic letters, or letters cut out of magazines
- share alphabet books and make your own with the child
- write lists and messages together, caption photos and their drawings and make scrapbooks on holidays
- show children how you read different kinds of written material for different purposes—a novel or magazine for pleasure and relaxation, a recipe, an instruction manual to assemble a piece of furniture, a TV guide, a bus timetable
- recognise early ‘pretend reading’ as ‘real reading’ as the child ‘reads’ a book to a favourite toy, for example
- tell your child how clever they are when they recognise a word on a shop sign, or a written word in a familiar story
- choose books with a repeated phrase and help the child to find recurring words—‘This is the house that Jack built ...’
- look up information in books, magazines and on the internet together
- read, read, read stories to your child from birth—read favourites over and over and share stories even when the child can read for themselves.



Summary

Talk is the foundation of literacy. You can't have too many conversations with young children, nor can you read them too many stories. Parents help their children with literacy when they play with alphabet sounds and letters, model reading for pleasure and information, and involve children in reading and writing for everyday purposes.

Want to know more? Visit www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/firstyear