

Supporting Literacy at Home and in Child Care

You support early literacy at home by having back-and-forth interactions with your child, reading and singing with them, and making sure they have access to age-appropriate toys, books, magazines, and coloring/writing materials as they grow. A strong connection between what your child does at home and in child care helps to set the stage for them to read and write when they are developmentally ready. Quality child care programs understand that children learn and develop new skills at different paces. They provide learning opportunities through the activities they plan, the materials available to children, and the interactions they have with children each day. They also recognize the importance of unstructured and pretend play in learning, including early literacy skills. When you're choosing a child care program, visit those you are interested in and look for these signs that the program values and supports literacy:

For Babies

Does the caregiver:

- ☐ Hold, touch, and make eye contact with babies often?
- ☐ Respond to babies' cries, squeals, gurgles, and giggles as if they are having a conversation?
- ☐ Interact with babies during diaper changes, meal times, and other transitions?
- ☐ Read books with rhymes, name things, and allow the babies to pat the pictures?
- ☐ Play games like peek-a-boo and sing songs with babies?

Look for:

- ☐ Board and soft books that show different cultures, physical abilities, and types of families that are accessible for babies to reach, hold, and look at most of the day
- ☐ Time when music is played during the day

WHO WE ARE

Child Care Aware® of America is our nation's leading voice for child care. We advance a child care system that effectively serves all children's growth, development and educational advancement and creates positive economic impact for families and communities.

To learn more about our mission, visit childcareaware.org



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Learning to Read and Write Begins at Birth



You help your child learn every day without even thinking about it. You do this when you sing a lullaby to your baby, say a silly rhyme to your toddler, or read your child a favorite bedtime story. You know these things make your child feel loved, safe, and happy. Did you also know you are helping them learn skills needed for reading, writing, and school success? You are your child's first and best teacher. Build on what you do at home by making sure that your child is having fun with reading and writing in child care too.

Learn About Literacy

Learning to read and write is like learning to walk; it does not happen all at once. First, your child rolls over, then inches along the floor, and eventually crawls. But when your child takes the first step, it's magic!

While learning to read and write feels like magic when it finally happens (usually around ages 5 to 7), it is a process just like walking. First, your baby makes sounds, imitates your facial expressions, and learns to connect words to objects. Then you begin to notice your child pointing at and naming pictures in the books you read together. At first you hold the book for your baby, but soon your child is holding the book right side up and turning pages without help. Eventually they begin to say words and recognize letters and sounds. All of this is the beginning of learning how to read and write – often called early literacy. Other early literacy skills include scribbling, drawing pictures, memorizing, and pretend-reading.



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- ❑ Rattles, squeak toys, and push and pull toys available to babies most of the day
- ❑ Pictures of babies' families and a mirror so babies can see themselves

For Toddlers

In addition to the above, does the caregiver:

- ❑ Listen to, repeat, encourage, and build on toddlers' words?
- ❑ Do finger plays, rhyming, and counting games?
- ❑ Let toddlers turn pages of board books and ask them to name pictures?
- ❑ Provide opportunities for pretend play, like "going to the grocery store?"

Look for:

- ❑ Soft, cozy places for reading stories alone or to a stuffed animal

- ❑ Art supplies, like big crayons and paper, available to toddlers during the day
- ❑ Puppets, play phones, and dolls
- ❑ Toddlers' drawings, with their name written on it, displayed where they can see them

For Preschoolers

Does the caregiver:

- ❑ Read books with children every day, both one-on-one and in small groups?
- ❑ Give children time to look at books by themselves and with friends every day?
- ❑ Help children recognize and sound out letters in books and around the room?
- ❑ Have back-and-forth interactions with children throughout the day?
- ❑ Encourage children to talk to each other?

- ❑ Play games like "Simon Says" and "Mother May I" with the children?
- ❑ Listen to children's stories and poems, and write them down for children?
- ❑ Give children chances to pretend-write things like notes, recipes, and shopping lists?

Look for:

- ❑ Books about things like different families and cultures, animals, counting, and the alphabet
- ❑ Opportunities to interact with print in the room, like signs, labels, and a big alphabet
- ❑ Objects that add reading and writing into playtime (ex. message pad and markers near a play phone, a book about trucks or maps near play cars and trucks)
- ❑ Areas for writing and drawing with things like paper, crayons, markers, and chalk/chalk board
- ❑ Activities that develop fine motor skills like picking up small items with tongs or tweezers, lacing cards, stringing beads, etc.

Find checklists with more information on what to look for and ask during your child care visit at www.childcareaware.org.



Partner with Your Provider

Partnering with your child care provider sends a message to your child and their caregiver that you care about what they are doing and learning together. Here are some ways that you can stay involved and encourage an early literacy partnership:

- ❑ Visit your child at child care and read a book aloud.
- ❑ Ask your provider questions about what your child is talking about and reading. Share information about your child's latest favorite book or the new words they are learning.
- ❑ Send notes that can be read out loud with your child at child care, and ask your child's caregiver to help your child "write" notes back to you.
- ❑ Help your child write names on pictures they make for your provider or another child at child care.
- ❑ Talk with your child about what happened in child care every day.

With support from you and their caregiver, your child will be on the road to literacy, from babbling and board books to reading and writing their first words!