

## Tips for Parents and Caregivers

OR

### Early Literacy Asides

Please make these as specific as possible.

You are helping parents and caregivers understand how important talking, singing, reading, playing, and writing is to their child.

You are reinforcing and modeling the skills, while reminding why you (and they) are using specific building blocks to achieve the best for their children.

**As you begin to use these tips, start small until you feel comfortable. You are learning a new skill.**

**It is not necessary to have a tip for every activity. It is fine to use one or two per storytime.**

### **Suggestions for Asides that deal with:**

#### Phonological Awareness

1. One of the early literacy skills children need to be able to learn to read is to hear the smaller sounds in words. (This is called phonological awareness.) There are many ways to use this skill as you talk, write, read, play and sing with them every day. Today in storytime I'll be pointing out some ways to help children with rhyming words OR breaking words into syllables OR hearing the beginning sounds in words (USE ONLY ONE).
2. Singing nursery rhymes helps children get ready to read. As you say or sing the rhymes, children hear the smaller sounds in words (it develops phonological awareness). Phonological awareness is the ability to play with sounds in words, an important skill for learning to read.
3. Talking with babies is so important! We know that babies, up to 12 months

of age, recognize the speech sounds only of the languages they hear from the people who talk and play with them.

4. As you sing to your child they hear words being broken up into smaller sounds because there is a different note for each syllable. This skill is part of phonological awareness.
5. Read predictable and rhyming books, recite poems, and do fingerplays that play with sounds.
6. Reading books that follow or build on a familiar song reinforces the language as well as the music.
7. Encourage children to make sound effects and/or animal sounds in a book as you read.
8. Encourage children to join in with rhyming words in books and songs.
9. Play word games with sounds. (“I spy something that rhymes with *cat*. Can you guess?”)
10. Encourage children to make up their own rhymes; nonsense words are good! (Think Dr. Seuss and all his nonsense words!)
11. Clap, tap, or use rhythm sticks (wooden spoons from the kitchen) to hear the breakdown of syllables in words while singing or saying rhymes.

### **Vocabulary**

1. Vocabulary is knowing the meanings of words. Research has found that children with large vocabularies, who know lots of different words, find it easier to read when that time comes.
2. As you talk, sing, read, play and write with your children throughout the day, you can build your children’s vocabulary.
3. It is fine to use words that are unfamiliar to your children. Don’t replace

words in books that they may not understand. Explain them.

4. When you talk with your children, try to use the word for a specific thing. For example, when you point out a dog mention the exact breed if you know it (“Look at that dog. You can tell it is a pug by its face, color and size.”)
5. As you share a book, take advantage of expanding their vocabulary by talking with them about the pictures in the book.
6. Remember to talk to your child about something that happened in the past, a story, or what you are going to do together. These little bits of conversation can add up to rich vocabulary that will make a big difference in how much your child understands when she learns to read.
7. Even if you don’t talk about the meaning of every unfamiliar word, your child will hear the story and get an idea of what it means as you point to the pictures.
8. Give positive feedback when your child understands what you are saying or follows directions.
9. Bring in real objects to show something in a story.
10. Parents should speak with children in the language that is most comfortable to them, using complex language and ideas. Children will have the benefit of learning many vocabulary words that they will later translate into English.

### **Print Awareness**

1. Print Awareness is knowing how to handle a book, and noticing print in books, signs, TV, boxes, and food containers (cereal boxes). It is one of the skills researchers say is important to know before children learn to read. As you talk, sing, read, play and write with your children throughout the day, you can find ways to share your children’s awareness of print. Today, in storytime, I’ll point out some of the ways you can do this.
2. I pointed to some of the words as we read them. This helps children learn

that we are reading text, not just the pictures.

3. A key concept that children need is the idea that text represents what we say. It is helpful to point out letters, signs, and words throughout the day.
4. Print is all around us from signs, t-shirts, banners, highway signs. When your children notice a stop sign or the sign to a favorite restaurant, that's print awareness. They are "reading" the sign.
5. If your children are drawing a picture, have them tell you about it. Write down their words on the page. This helps them understand that the written word represents what they said. This is print awareness.
6. Talk about writing when you have your child sign a card, even if it isn't legible, yet. They will get the idea that what they write means something (to them AND the recipient!).

### **Letter Knowledge**

1. Letter knowledge is knowing that letters are different from each other and that the same letter can look different (upper case and lower case). Letters also represent sounds. There are many activities that you can do throughout the day to develop your children's letter knowledge in fun ways through talking, singing, reading, playing and writing. I'll mention a few of these activities during storytime today.
2. You don't need an alphabet book to look at letters. Have your child look for letters in any book that are part of his or her name.
3. Play matching games with letters. This helps a child recognize differences in similar letters (lower case b with lower case d for instance).
4. Before children learn their letters, they are aware of shapes. Before they can hold a crayon or marker, they can move their bodies. Encourage them to use their whole arms and bodies to make shapes. (Put arms together; draw a shape in the air.)

5. Play “I Spy” with letters at stores. See if they can find a specific letter from their name.
6. Prompt children to recite or sing the letters of the alphabet.
7. Sort items at home that start with the same letters.
8. Use magnetic alphabet letters to find shapes, as well as learning the alphabet.
9. While looking at letters, ask your child what he or she notices about the letters (straight lines, curvy lines, circles) and sort them into categories.
10. Sort objects (toys, tools, kitchen tools, bath toys) into categories that start with the same sounds or letters.

### **Background Knowledge**

1. Children with strong background knowledge are more likely to understand what they read. They will become successful readers. One way for them to accumulate any knowledge is by talking with them about everything you see and do together.
2. Sharing informational books (nonfiction) builds background knowledge. Our library has many books that are perfect for the age of your child. I’ve brought in some for you to see and take out, along with some lists of my favorites.
3. Children are naturally curious about all kinds of things. The more they know about topics, the easier it will be for them to understand what they read about when they get to school.
4. Children need a lot of repetition to learn. They need to hear words over and over again as you are doing things together.
5. Children love for you to read favorite books over and over again. It may get boring for you, but their brains need repetition to learn language.

6. Helping your children associate books and reading with an enjoyable activity is supporting print motivation, which is their interest in and enjoyment of books and reading. Researchers have noted that children who have enjoyable experiences around books will most likely stick with learning to read even if it is difficult.
7. Add factual information to storybooks if possible. (Use an example from YOUR storytime: “Even *Duck on a Bike* by David Shannon has bikes, a tractor, and farm animals that can add to information other than the funny story of farm animals riding bikes!”)
8. It is good to ask open-ended questions to children as they listen to see if they understand the information, or emotions of characters.
9. Children love to hear you read with good voice characterizations. It will hold their attention and encourage participation.

### **Talking**

1. Talk to your babies in “parentese,” or baby talk. Use a high-pitched happy voice; longer vowels; slower, clearer language with repetition.
2. When you talk with your baby about a picture or book or about anything, leave time for your baby to babble back. This is the beginning of developing language.
3. Your baby can express being hungry, tired, excited, and angry, so this is a good time to introduce sign language. Sign language helps alleviate frustration and promotes vocabulary development.
4. When you share a book with baby, make sure baby is comfortable. That could be in your lap, or even on the floor as baby lies on her tummy.
5. Board books are meant for babies. Babies may pull and push or even put the book into their mouth. Direct the baby to the pictures and talk or sing words or read.

6. As your baby plays with toys, feels things, or tastes food, talk about the textures, the sizes, colors, sounds, and tastes. These words will lead to sorting and problem-solving skills.
7. When talking with children, give them time to respond; give them 5 seconds for their brains to interpret what you are asking to finding an answer.
8. Share language with storytelling, songs and fingerplays. Let puppets do some talking! (You do not need to be a ventriloquist! Your child will love it.)
9. Help children connect what they hear in books to their lives through discussions – even relating back to the books later in the day.
10. Sequencing is very important in reading and understanding. Have your children retell a story that you have read to them. Start with just a part of the story and with prompts, work towards the whole story as they get better at it.
11. Read WITH your children different book apps, or electronic books. As you do this together, you are guiding the conversation.

## **Writing**

1. Encourage your child to draw and write. When you write, have your child write, too.
2. Even toddlers can help with a recipe for playdough. This is a fun time to roll, pound, and squeeze, all of which are fine motor skills.
3. Make little books together. Your child can draw a story, and you can write down the words. Have them “sign” their work.
4. Have paper and markers handy for your child to play with – even if it is only writing straight lines or curves.
5. Put on some music and let your child fill a paper with colors and lines as they listen. See what they do with classical, or jazz, or children’s songs.

Ask them about their finished drawing and label the music they were listening to as they drew.

6. Make big movements with arms and hands as you do fingerplays at home. This helps large motor skills and will eventually lead to writing.
7. Blowing bubbles with children helps with their writing skills as they try and “catch” the bubbles with their fingers. This improves their small motor skills.

### **Reading**

1. Your child is moving around a lot. Put board books in every room, where they can reach them! When children see books all around, they will want to “read” them. At any time of the day, a book will be available for a quick read, a fun read.
2. Set aside a special time for reading, but take a cue from your child and make it a special *mutual* time. Ease into it, if necessary. Please don’t force it. Make it very brief until the child builds enjoyment of this time.
3. Let your children turn the pages of magazines for you. Point out pictures and let them label some of the objects. This helps them learn to handle books.

### **Playing**

1. Babies can move to music by rocking or swaying, so turn up the volume and dance with your baby! Children will benefit from feeling the rhythm and beat, and everyone gets to have fun.
2. As you encourage and support your child’s pretend play, you are developing problem solving and benefits reading as books become longer and more complex.
3. Encourage outdoor play with different things and ideas to explore. Add descriptions to what he or she is seeing and doing.

4. Toddlers need great practice for balance and coordination. This is the perfect opportunity to throw and kick a ball around in the house (NERF ball) or outside.
5. Playing with simple puzzles, turning pieces around to fit, is a skill that will help them later as they learn and recognize letters.
6. Even toddlers can help with a recipe for playdough. This is a fun time to roll, pound, and squeeze, all of which are fine motor skills.
7. Sorting toys by color, size, objects used for specific functions (cooking, tools, gardening, cleaning) is also play and helps children's thinking skills.

### Singing

1. Our library has many CDs that you can take out to help you with songs for you and the children to sing together. Try a new CD each week. Find your favorite CDs and make playlists for you and your child for car rides and dance marathons. (Not all libraries have CD collections. Mention music, songs, playlists, and specific artists that you like for today's parents!)
2. Try singing (any tune will do) conversations with baby and/or children. Your voice and tone will help babies learn your voice and respond. Let baby babble back to you. Let older children make up a tune with their conversations.
3. Sing and clap and chant nursery rhymes. When you hear a word that your child wants to know what it means, start with clapping the syllables. It is important for children to hear the syllables in words and will help with their reading skills later on. There are easy and singable nursery rhymes.
4. Lullabies are very important for soothing baby. Make it part of your routine for bed and naps. It will quiet baby, but also help with learning words. We have CDs to check out with lovely soothing melodies for your child, or you can download some of our favorites.
5. Singing slows down language so children can hear the smaller sounds in

words. As you sing a song, make sure you pronounce each word.

6. Use songs to sequence such as “This is the way we \_\_\_\_\_ (get dressed, go to the library, take a bath, eat our lunch, etc.)”
7. Sing songs that tell a story such as “Mary had a Little Lamb.” This will help your child remember the sequence of events by the different verses.