



It's more than the ABCs. Early literacy means much more than just reading and writing. It includes babbling, talking, recognizing letters and sounds, and knowing what all kinds of pictures and signs mean. Early literacy is also scribbling, drawing pictures, memorizing, and pretend-reading.

Step by step. First your baby makes sounds, imitates your facial expressions, and learns that hearing "mama" means "my mother." Then you begin to notice your child point at and name 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 the pages without help. This is the beginning of learning how to read and write—often called *early literacy*.

Learning to read and write is like learning to walk. You can see it happening—first your child can roll over, then inch along the floor ... next comes crawling ... but when your child takes that first step, it's magic! Just like walking, being able to read and write is a process, even though it feels like magic when it finally happens—usually around ages 5 to 7. **Learning to read and write doesn't happen all at once.**

2 Learn About Literacy

What about learning two languages? Great! Young children are very good at learning more than one language. In addition to what's in this brochure, there are some special ways that parents and child care providers can help children who are learning two languages. To find out more, call your local CCR&R center or contact Child Care Aware. **A multi-lingual environment.** Your child will learn two languages best if they know that both languages are important and valued. They also need to have lots of fun and meaningful chances to talk, read, and pretend-write in both languages.



>> Call 1-800-424-2246 or visit ChildCareAware.org to find the CCR&R center in your area.

Call the Experts This brochure will give you a good start to knowing how you and your child's caregiver can best build your child's early reading and writing skills. But a call to your local experts—your child care resource and referral (CCR&R) center—can give you a lot more information about literacy resources. **Help with all your child care needs.** Your CCR&R center can also help you with evaluating and finding child care, financial assistance, and other resources.

Five Steps to Reading and Writing Success

A GUIDE TO EARLY LITERACY IN CHILD CARE

Learning to Read & Write Begins at Birth

Child Care Aware is a national initiative, conducted by NACCRRRA, The Nation's Network of Child Care Resource and Referral, committed to helping parents find the best information on locating quality child care and child care resources in their community. Child Care Aware, in partnership with local child care resource and referral centers, builds consumer awareness and supports families in making choices for the care and education of their children.

ChildCareAware®
America's most trusted child care resource.™

For additional resources, or for help in locating your local child care resource and referral center, call:

1-800-424-2246
ChildCareAware.org



The story of how your child learns to read and write begins with you.

You do it every day—without even thinking about it! Sing a lullaby to your baby. Say a silly rhyme to your toddler. 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 your child learn skills needed for reading, writing, and school success?

You and your family are always your child's first and best teachers. Build on what you do at home by making sure that your child is having fun with reading and writing in child care, too.

Look inside for five simple steps to literacy success.



3 Check Out Your Child Care

Evaluate the early literacy activities and materials your child's caregiver offers. Use the *Early Literacy Child Care Checklist* below to help you.



✓ For All Ages

- Does the caregiver have special training in early childhood education, First Aid, and CPR?
- Has the caregiver been in the same program or providing care in the home for at least a year?
- Are just a few children being cared for by one caregiver (low child/adult ratio)?
- If there is more than one caregiver in the setting, is the total number of children in the group still fairly small (group size)?
- If your child is in a child care center or family child care home, does the caregiver have national accreditation, such as National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), or National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC), and state licensure?
- Does the caregiver welcome drop-in visits and parent ideas and involvement?
- Are there planned things for children to do as well as lots of time for free play?
- Are materials—such as books, blocks, toys, and art supplies—available to children all day long?
- Does the place look clean and safe, and is hand washing done often?
- Does the caregiver have written policies and procedures, including emergency plans?
- Does the caregiver have references?

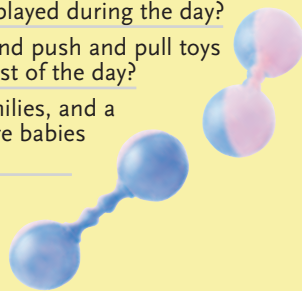
✓ For Babies (Birth to One Year)

Does the caregiver...

- Hold, touch, and make eye contact with babies a lot?
- Use words when responding to babies' crying?
- Talk about what is happening during routines, like "Let's wash our hands. Here's the soap."
- Read books with rhymes, naming things and letting the babies pat at pictures?
- Play games like peek-a-boo with babies?
- Sing to babies?

Are there...

- Board and soft books that show different cultures, physical abilities, and types of families, where babies can reach them to hold and look at most of the day?
- Times when music is played during the day?
- Rattles, squeak toys, and push and pull toys available to babies most of the day?
- Pictures of babies' families, and a mirror to look in, where babies can see themselves?



4 Partner With Your Provider

Visiting and participating in events at child care sends a strong message. It tells your child and your child's caregiver that you think what your child is doing and learning is important.

5 Read, Repeat, and Relax

What you do with your child at home will make the biggest difference in how ready your child is for reading and writing.



✓ Preschoolers (Three to Five Year Olds)

Does the caregiver...

- Read books with children every day—one-on-one and in small groups, sometimes, so that everyone can see?
- Give children time to look at books by themselves or with each other every day?
- Help children recognize letters in books and things they see all around them, like signs, calendars, and directions?
- Help children sound out letters and words?
- Talk and listen to children throughout the day?
- Encourage children to talk with 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 diaries, recipes, and shopping lists?
- Praise children for their efforts at pretend-writing, spelling, and copying letters?

Are there...

- Many kinds of books and magazines about things like different families and cultures, animals, counting, and the alphabet?
- Lots of things with print where children can see them, like labels on pictures and containers, signs, and a big alphabet?
- Things that add reading and writing into play time, like a phone book, message pad, and markers near a play phone, or a book about trucks or maps near play cars and trucks?
- A special area for writing and drawing with things like books, paper, crayons and markers, and chalk and a chalk board?



✓ For Toddlers (One and Two Year Olds)

In addition to the above, does the caregiver...

- Listen to, repeat, and encourage toddlers' words?
- Do finger plays, rhyming, and counting games?
- Let toddlers turn pages of board books, and ask toddlers to name pictures?
- Help toddlers pretend-play things like "going to the grocery store"?

Are there...

- Soft, cozy places for toddlers to read stories to themselves and their stuffed animals?
- Art supplies, like big crayons and paper, out for toddlers to use during the day?
- Puppets, play phones, and dolls out for toddlers to use during the day?
- Toddlers' drawings, with their name written on it, hung up where they can see them?

5 simple things you can do:

- ★ **Talk to your child's caregiver** about the things listed on the *Early Literacy Child Care Checklist*, and work together on adding literacy materials and activities into your child's daily child care routine.
- ★ **Visit your child** at child care and read a book out loud.
- ★ Offer to **go on a field trip** to the local library.
- ★ **Have parent-caregiver meetings** regularly, and ask questions about what your child is talking about and reading.
- ★ **Be there for your child's birthday party**, and pick out family pictures with your child that you can label and share at the party.

4 easy after-work options:

- ★ Take a few minutes to **talk with your child's caregiver** at drop-off and pick-up times. Share information about your child's latest favorite book, or the new words your child is 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 your child makes for your caregiver or another child at child care.
- ★ **Talk with your child** about what happened in child care every day.



Again, please! Children like to hear the same story again and again—so have fun picking out a new picture or letter to talk about each time, or telling the story a little bit wrong so your child will say, "That's not what it says!"

Whether you are reading with your baby or preschooler, don't rush through the book—take time to read it and talk about it together.

Have fun with literacy. Read, talk, sing, and play with your child—and don't worry! Young children learn at very different rates. Your child will want to read and write if it is a fun and natural part of what you do each day.

Give praise freely. Encouraging your baby and young child during all of the early literacy stages gives your child the confidence to read and write later. Before you know it, your child will be reading out loud to you!

