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*It is not enough to simply teach children to read; we have to give them something worth reading. Something that will stretch their imaginations—something that will help them make sense of their own lives and encourage them to reach out toward people who's lives are quite different from their own.*

*Katherine Patterson*

# Early Literacy Newsletter

FALL 2011

## Infant Literacy



While formal reading instruction usually doesn't begin until children enter elementary school, early literacy development — *during the first 3 years of life* — builds the foundation for children to progress as readers and writers.

Literacy begins with age-appropriate activities that can help foster a love of reading and writing even in infants.

Early literacy activities include scribbling with crayons on paper, playing with a newspaper, turning the pages of a picture book, singing nursery rhymes and hearing stories read aloud. Even chewing on the pages of a board book is a worthwhile exploration! Any positive interaction with literary materials can help a child develop an interest in learning to read when the time is right.

The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) stressed that, while reading and writing are critical to success in school and beyond, early literacy learning needs to be developmentally appropriate. Par-

ents can help by engaging their children in conversation, teaching letters and sounds, and reading to their kids.

Research has shown that reading and writing skills develop at the same time a child develops language, and these skills are all very closely related. In his renowned book *The Read-Aloud Handbook*, author Jim Trelease noted that just as talking to a newborn is second nature to a parent, so too should be reading to the child.

An infant doesn't understand language yet but learns much from the experience. "If a child is old enough to talk to," wrote Trelease, "she's old enough to read to. It's the same language."

Just as important as reading to a young child is reading to an older child, even if he is capable of reading on his own. According to Trelease, "Almost as big a mistake as not reading to children at all is stopping too soon."

One argument is that, while a first-grader may be capa-

ble of reading some books independently, she may be capable of understanding more complex stories if they are read to her aloud. This challenges her and enables her to grow further in her literacy.

Beyond that, there is an emotional bond created between people who read aloud together. As a child grows older and more independent, reading together is a way for a parent to stay connected.

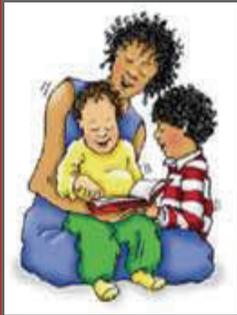
How can parents begin to introduce literacy skills to their infants and toddlers? Zero to Three has created a valuable resource in its ["Early Literacy and Language Tips and Tools."](#) giving specific suggestions about how to engage your young child in literacy.

As time goes on, embrace opportunities to engage in literacy with your child. Reading together or discussing books and newspaper articles can remind your child that you are interested in him and what he is learning, and it can help you build a lasting bond that benefits you both for years to come.

## Activities that Support Your Infant's or Toddler's Literacy Development

"Children are made readers on the laps of their parents."

Emilie Buchwald



*There are many little ways to enlarge your child's world.*

*LOVE of books is the best of all.*

*Jacqueline Kennedy*

**Playing with sounds**-making silly sounds and having your child repeat them back to you

**Learning about rhymes**-saying or singing nursery rhymes or children's songs

**Talking about things outside**-going for a walk, pointing out what you see, giving your child new words to describe objects

**Listening to different sounds**-listening to sounds in nature and giving your child words to describe the sounds

**Discovering print**-pointing out print in books, newspapers, magazines

**Seeing first words**-in books and around the home

**Learning my name**-showing the child their name as you write it down

**Learning how to use books**-looking at and reading books together

**Many ways to draw**-experimenting with crayons, markers, pens etc.

**Many ways to write**-letting your child watch you sign cards, make grocery lists, writing down words say to you

### Why use these activities?

These activities will help you, the parents and caregivers of infants and toddlers, assist children in the development of early language and literacy skills. The activities address awareness of books and print, sounds and rhymes, and use of language.

You can use the activities during play and daily routines.



You can use the activities when you and your child are:

- \*together
- \*your child is happy
- \*your child is not hungry
- \*your child is not tired
- \*the activity goes along with what your child is doing (looking at a book)



## SONGS, RHYMES, EXERCISE AND LITERACY

Music is a universal language that lifts our spirits and brings joy to our soul. Baby songs are soothing and entertaining, and studies have shown that babies learn the sounds of language when they are exposed to songs, rhymes, chants and nursery rhymes. Researchers have long suspected that lullabies and other songs help babies make the transition from crying to babbling, and eventually to talking.

### Wiggles and Giggles (London Bridge) For Babies 6 weeks to 7 months

Place your baby on your lap so you can see each other. Allow him/her to grasp your forefingers with each hand. Gently spread baby's arms out to the sides as far as possible, then bring them across the baby's chest and return them to the starting position. Don't forget to sing along! This game will also help stretch baby's arms, chest, shoulders and upper back muscles.

### Scissors (Row, Row, Row Your Boat)

While your baby lies on his/her back, kneel at his feet and grasp his lower legs around the knees. Smile as you gently move his legs up and down in a kicking motion. The purpose of this exercise is to stretch and stimulate the lower back and hip muscles. Extend each scissor kick to each legs full range of movement.



### Puss 'n' Boots (The Farmer in the Dell)

Lay your baby on his back in your lap or on the floor. Grasp below the knees and hold his legs down straight. Next push your child's legs into a bent knee position with thighs touching his tummy. Return the legs to the straightened position. Your baby will make the pleasant association between rhythm and movement as you sing along. You will be stimulating your child's back, thigh and leg muscles.



Exercising baby involves more than just assisting baby's muscle development. Baby is also gaining self-awareness and learning about you through your facial expressions, voice, and touch. He is also learning about trust, and body and space awareness. All of these things help him move more efficiently and become more confident in himself.



### Baby Hop (Bunny Hop) For Babies from 8 months to one year

Snuggle baby in your lap, facing away from you. Playfully clap baby's hands and then his feet. Hold baby under his arms for hopping.

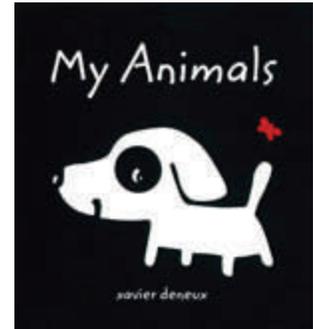
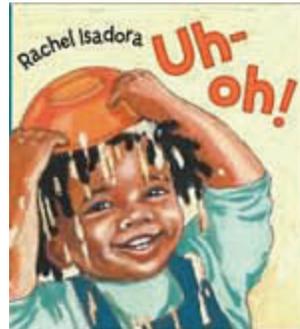
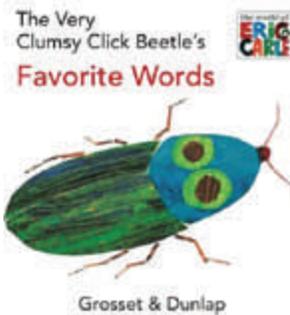
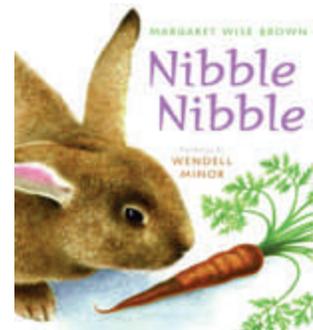
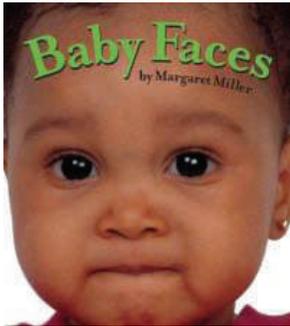
### Twist and Twirl (Pop Goes the Weasel)

Hold baby in outstretched arms in facing you. Slowly turn him from left to right. When the "pop" comes, lean forward. Give a quick kiss and a wave when the song indicates.

The following games will help to strengthen relationships with their play partners, enhancing their understanding of concepts, and expanding on language and listening skills.

*(Info taken from the Baby Literacy Project-Waterloo Region)*

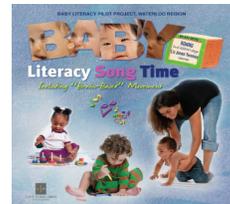
# Suggested Books for Infants



**"A great resource for parents of infants and toddlers!"**

Baby Literacy Pilot Project  
Waterloo Region

<http://www.braingym.com.au/CD-Baby-Literacy-Song-Time-scp35410.html>



Hands  
TheFamilyHelpNetwork.ca

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