

Literacy Activities for Toddlers and Preschoolers

My Book About Me

Create a book all about your child use photos, magazines, leaves, scraps of a favorite blanket, etc. Put them in a photo album or glue them onto cardstock and string together the pages with ribbon or yarn.

Anything Book

Create a book by taking pictures of street signs, things that are certain colors, people in your family, favorite foods, or any other category. Put pictures in an album or glue into place and label each picture with one-word labels.

Make an Alphabet or Counting Book

Staple blank pages together and put a number or letter on each page. Ask your child to draw a picture to go with what's on the page. Do this with a book that has the first letter of your child's name on each page.

My Favorite Things Book

Staple together 10 blank pages and ask your child to think of their 10 favorite things. Assist if needed, favorite food, best friend, book, etc. Write the words on the pages and help them illustrate.

Copy Me.

Have your child draw and copy whatever he/she draws. After a short while, change places and have him or her copy what you draw, model different shapes, letters, or simple lines and designs.

Game of 3's

Have your child follow three very silly directions such as pat your tummy, run in a circle, and then put a book on your head. Give all three directions and then say go.

Play Simon Says

Use letter sounds, body parts, colors, numbers or other categories to make the game interesting. Simon says, "Put your hand on something that rhymes with bat."

Play I Spy

This is great for in the car, grocery store, while waiting in line somewhere. Use colors, sounds, etc. I spy something that is shaped like a circle.

Categories

Another fun car game or even dinnertime game. Someone names a category and each player tries to name something in that category. Things you find in the kitchen, things that have wings, etc.

More or Less

During meals or other opportunities, ask questions like who has more potatoes, you or me? Which car is bigger the blue truck or the yellow bus? Use any extremes you can think of.

Opposites

Play the opposite game. You name something and they name the opposite, or vice versa. If they struggle, try acting it out or giving a hint.

Fill in the Blank

Share a familiar nursery rhyme and leave out an important word. Have your child help you complete the rhyme. Jack and Jill went up the _____, to fetch a pail of _____. Jack fell down and broke his _____ and Jill came tumbling _____. This also works with favorite stories that are repeated. Have your child supply a missing repetitive phrase and point to the words as you do it.

Picture Only Books

Find books that have only pictures or very few words. Have your child tell you a story that goes with the pictures. Go a step further and write down the story or record it to share later.

Record a Story

Record your own voice reading one of your child's favorite books. Give this to them when you are going to be away as a special story treat.

PEER Strategy

P: prompt your child with a question about the story. "What is that?"

E: Evaluate child's response. "Yes, that's right! That's a balloon."

E: Expand on the response. "That's a big, red balloon. We saw one of those at the circus."

R: Repeat or revisit the prompt, including additional information or vocabulary. "That red balloon is huge, it's really, really big!"

Traffic Signs

Any time you're in the car, choose a particular sign and count them. Let's count all the stop signs on the way to school today.

Environmental Print

Print is all around us! Work with your child to "read" what's around them, cereal boxes, signs, bumper stickers, etc. Ask simple questions like, what's the first letter of your name? C. Do you see a C on this box?

Alphabet Poster

On a large piece of construction paper or poster paper, draw a particular letter. Look through magazines to find pictures that start with that sound. Cut and paste them onto your poster.

Dress Up and Act Out

Dress up like favorite book characters and act out a scene from the book.

Puppets

Make finger or paper bag puppets to go along with a story and use them as you read the book.

Reading Fort

Use sheets or blankets and chairs to create a fort. Hide under the fort and read books by flashlight. Avoid any scary stories in this context.

Book Food

If you have a book that talks about a particular food, try it out at home. Make porridge like the Three Little Bears, or Green Eggs and Ham.

Reading Picnic

Pack a picnic and head to the park with a couple of good books. Rainy day? Try it indoors in the living room.

Book Themed Party

Turn your favorite book into a party using decorations, food, characters, and activities to go along with your child's favorite children's book.

Sing a Book

Simply sing the words to a favorite book. Have your child sing along.

Read a "Movie" Story

Find a great book that has a movie to go with it. Share the story together as a family and then enjoy the movie together as well.

Illustrate a Favorite Song

Write the lyrics to your child's favorite song and work with your child to add drawings to the words.

Book Art

Make a color copy of the cover of your child's favorite book, frame it and hang it in his/her bedroom.

Family Reading Time

Allocate a 15-20 minute time block every night where the whole family drops everything and reads.

Book Exchange Party

Invite your child's friends over and ask them to bring 2-3 books they want to trade. Create a list of trade guidelines ahead of time that work for your group. Each child should go home with new to them books!

Holiday Book Grab Bag

A unique gift exchange option. Have children bring new books, wrapped with an appropriate age/gender tag on the outside. Have the children pick numbers out of a hat and select a wrapped book. They unwrap their books at the same time.

Write Together

Any time you need to write something, have your child help you or sit with you. Have him/her do their own bills, letters, thank yous, etc. while you do yours. Talk out loud while you complete your tasks.

Cards

Have your child create cards for various occasions. You can have them create the art work for your holiday cards, sign their names on thank you cards, make birthday cards for family and friends. You can also write/type the messages they dictate in cards, letters, and emails.

Write with Stuff

Use various materials to write in, shaving cream on a cookie sheet, sand, finger paint, frosting, glitter and whatever creative mediums you can think of.

Clay or Play-Doh

Write letters, numbers or words on large sheets of paper. Roll clay or Play-Doh into long strands and have your child use it to trace the letters.

Dictation Stories

Be the scribe for you young author while they tell the story. Do the same to create captions to any of the book ideas mentioned previously or to add captions to drawings or family pictures.

Experiment with Writing Implements

Keep lots of papers and writing tools available to your child, markers, crayons, pens, pencils, paints, colored glue, and more.

Computer

Let your child click away at a keyboard in a word type document using a large font that is basic like comic sans.

Labels, Labels, Labels

Use simple labels to put names on things in your house, playroom, or child's room.

Sidewalk Chalk

Use outside to write letters or numbers with your child. Play a game by writing several letters in chalk and then having your child stand on each letter after giving a prompt such as find the B, stand on the letter that makes the /b/ sound, or stand on the sound your hear at the beginning of boy.