

Early Literacy Play



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Bloomsburg University of Pennsylvania
BU Toy Library: Language and Literacy Resource Center

What is Early Literacy?

Early literacy refers to what people know about reading and writing before they can actually read or write. Early literacy skills include

	Letter Knowledge Letter knowledge refers to a person's understanding of the shapes of letters and the sounds that letters make.
	Vocabulary Vocabulary refers to the number of words that a person uses (expressive) and understands (receptive).
	Print Motivation Print Motivation refers to a person's interest in reading and writing.
	Print Awareness Print Awareness refers to a person's understanding that printed text has meaning, is governed by a set of rules, and includes letters and words.
	Phonological Awareness Phonological Awareness refers to a person's understanding that language comprises words, syllables, rhymes, and sounds.
	Narration Narration refers to a person's ability to describe things and tell stories.

Letter Knowledge

Letter knowledge refers to a person’s understanding of the shapes of letters and the sounds that letters make. The BU Toy Library offers a wide selection of literacy and play resources to support the emergence of letter knowledge.

Funded through a National Honor Society of Phi Kappa Phi Literacy Award, Alphabet Literacy Play uses Dr. Howard Gardner’s theory of multiple intelligences as the basis for letter knowledge-building activities.

Intelligences	Activities
Linguistic: refers to how people use language to express their thoughts and feelings in words or writing 	1. Create a ‘My First Letter __ Book.’ 2. Read an ABC book. 3. Play letter games (e.g., Alphabet Bingo). 4. Recite the ABCs in English and other languages. 5. Make or say tongue twisters.
Logical Mathematical: refers to how people use logic and numbers to understand how things work or to detect a pattern 	1. Play “I Spy the letter ____” or “I Spy the letter that sounds like ____”. 2. Solve alphabet riddles (e.g., <i>Tomorrow’s Alphabet</i> and <i>Q is for Duck</i>). 3. Make an ABC meal by selecting three alphabet letter tiles and thinking of a food that begins with each letter.
Spatial: refers to how people visualize/represent a spatial world. 	1. Explore each letter through crafts (e.g., Kiragami). 2. Build a Letter ____ with Legos, K’ex, or Tinker Toys. 3. Place magnetic capital and/or lower case letters in a bag and play “Guess the Letter” without peeking. 4. Explore ABC picture books, puzzles, and DVDs. 5. Play an ABC matching game with letters in different sizes and fonts.

Kinesthetic: refers to how people use their bodies to understand something, create new knowledge, or convey meaning.



1. Act like an animal that begins with each letter.
2. Shape your body into letters.
3. Play alphabet games (e.g., Dr. Seuss' Super Stretchy ABC game or Alphabet Bean Bags)
4. Learn how to sign the alphabet.

Musical: refers to how people relate to, recognize, and create sound or music.



1. Sing letter songs.
2. Read ABC repetition & rhyming books (e.g., *Chicka Chicka Boom Boom* and *Dr. Seuss' ABCs*).
3. Read the musical notes (A through G) while learning how to use Boomwhackers or hand bells to play a favorite song.

Interpersonal: refers to how people relate to other people.



1. Read ABC books with social themes (e.g., *LMNO Peas* or *The Day that Z Went First*).
2. Role play professions from A to Z.
3. Play ABC group games (e.g., Alphabet Soup).
4. Write a poem using each letter of a person's name.

Intrapersonal: refers to how people understand themselves.



1. Make a shield to reflect who you are from A to Z.
2. Read ABC books about feelings (e.g., *A is for Angry* and *Feelings from A to Z*).
3. Make an ABC activity journal (e.g., *A Child's Day of Play*)

Naturalistic: refers to how people recognize, categorize, and understand nature.



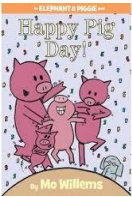
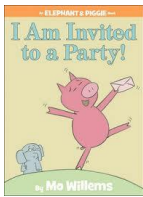
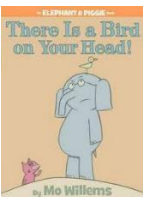
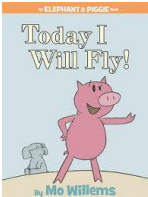
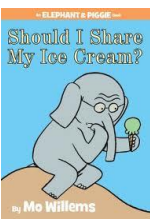
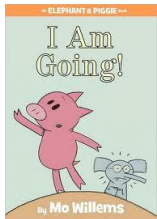
1. Design an alphabet garden (e.g., *V if for Venus Fly Trap*).
2. Go on an A to Z nature hike.
3. Make an alphabet nature collage.
4. Explore animals from A to Z.

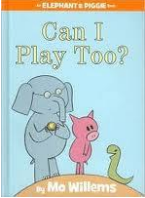
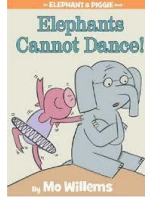
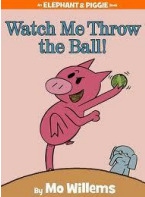
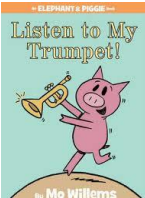
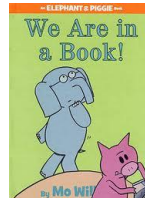
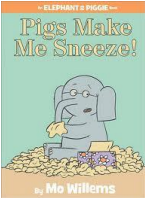
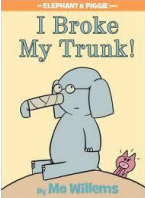
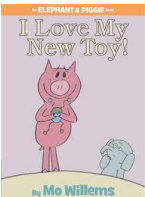
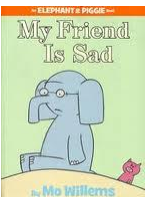
Vocabulary

Vocabulary refers to the number of words that a person uses (expressive) and understands (receptive). The BU Toy Library offers a wide selection of literacy and play resources to support vocabulary development.

- **Family literacy books** include conversational language, repeated words and phrases, well-spaced print, eye-catching illustrations, and familiar experiences.
- **Easy readers** include relatively few words and large-scale illustrations that give clues to the meaning of the text.
- **Informational texts** include technical terms that teach children words to discuss more complex ideas related to their interests.
- **Reference books** include dictionaries, thesauruses, word books, and alphabet books.

Funded through a College of Liberal Arts Faculty Enhancement Award, the Vocabulary Literacy Play initiative uses Mo Willems' award-winning series of Elephant and Piggie books as the basis for vocabulary-building activities.

Book(s)	Summary	Vocabulary Objective	Examples of Resources
 	Piggie is ready to party, but Elephant does not feel like celebrating. Elephant offers Piggie wardrobe advice as she prepares for a party.	Celebrations & Clothing Learn the names for special days of the year. Learn the names of articles of clothing and accessories.	Magnetic calendar Magnetic dress up sets Reference books about holidays across cultures
 	What are the chances of a bird (or two) landing on your head, falling in love, building a nest, and laying three eggs? Ask Elephant! Can pigs fly? Elephant is not so sure.	Animals Build a zoo, farm, or aquarium. Learn the names of animals and animal characteristics.	Animal figures Puppets Informational texts and reference books about animals
 	To share or not to share? What is Elephant to do? Elephant panics when he learns that Piggie is leaving until he learns where Piggie is going.	Food & Drink Learn the names for different foods.	Collection of play food and kitchen equipment Cookbooks and children's picture books about food

Book(s)	Summary	Vocabulary Objective	Examples of Resources
   	A friendly snake would like to play catch, but it's hard if you do not have arms. Piggie makes dancing look easy, but Elephant has moves of his own. Piggie may not be heading for the World Series but she is having a lot of fun! Elephant and Piggie play a game of hide-and-go-seek. But who is seeking whom?	Activities Get moving! Learn new action words.	Balls Obstacle course equipment Get-up-and-Go games Scavenger Hunt Books with suggested dance games and activities
 	Piggie is proud of the sounds that she can make with her instrument. Will Elephant be impressed? Elephant and Piggie discover that they are in a book. Piggie has a little fun by having the reader say a funny word.	Instruments & Sounds Explore, name, and play a collection of instruments. Your voice is an instrument, too! What sounds can you make?	Collection of musical instruments Songbooks and picture books based on popular children's songs Children's books that include and encourage onomatopoeia
	Elephant and Piggie discover they can have fun no matter what or where.	Places & Weather Where do you like to play? Learn the names of different places. Learn the names of seasons and weather.	Picture books, magnetic books, and felt boards about cities, towns, farms, and other locales Learning mats of the United States, the world, and beyond Reference literacy and play materials about weather
 	Is Elephant allergic to his best friend? After visiting with Dr. Cat, Elephant learns he just has a cold. Oh no! Elephant's trunk is broken. How could that have happened? It's a long story...	Occupations Learn the names of occupations as well as words/phrases related to each occupation.	Collection of role play costumes and props. Children's picture books about different occupations.
 	Piggie is excited to show Elephant her new toy. Elephant is excited, too—maybe too excited. Why is Elephant so sad? Piggie has to try to cheer him up.	Feelings Learn the names of feelings so that you can play feeling charades.	Feeling Flashcards Board games about emotions. Collection of picture books about feelings.

Print Motivation

Print Motivation refers to a person's interest in reading and writing. A person with high print motivation enjoys being read to, looking at books, and pretending to write. Pretend play may help people find enjoyment in reading and writing while exposing them to a wide range of literacy activities.

Funded by the Jones Center for Special Education Excellence, Print Motivation Literacy Play supports emergent readers' interest in reading and writing through the following print motivation-building resources and activities.

Occupation	Literacy Activities	Examples of Resources
Medical  	Make an appointment. Sign-in. Make a name tag or ID badge. Read the eye chart. Chart patient's height, weight, hair & eye color. Decorate the "office" with posters about good health and hygiene. Write prescriptions. Make "Get Well" cards.	<i>Reference books about animals and humans</i> <i>Children's picture books about the human body and health</i> Doctor/Vet costume Medical kit Puppets/Baby dolls Create-A-Person drawing pads
Kitchen  	Create a restaurant sign and menu. Write a shopping list. Read/Write recipes. Make a sign of today's specials. Compare food labels. Take reservations. Write down orders. Make nametags.	Children's cookbooks Food-themed picture books Chef/Waitress costumes Play food and kitchen equipment Set the Table Learning Mat Play Money Set Magnetic Board

Occupation	Literacy Activities	Examples of Resources
Explorer 	Take a walk or look out the window. Keep a journal about your encounters with nature. Read a book about some aspect of nature. Make and label an exhibit of natural resources. Learn how to read maps. Then, try making your own map. Learn how to read trail markers. Then, create your own trail markers.	<i>Collection of children's picture books about nature.</i> <i>Collection of reference materials about nature (e.g., National Geographic publications and pocket guides).</i> Explorer role play costume Magnifiers and bug catchers Metamorphosis sets Magnetic Animal Habitat Set Animal Figure totes
Community Helpers  	Learn how to read traffic signs. Then, make your own. Create ID badges. Write tickets. Learn how to read a map to locate the scene of an emergency. Then, try making your own. Make a pet tag to help a lost animal.	Collection of picture books about first responders. Reference books about maps, traffic signs, and symbols. Police/Firefighter costumes Collection of wooden rescue vehicles, traffic signs, town blocks, and other vehicles Around Town play area rugs
Mail carrier 	Read/Write postcards. Make/Follow a mail route. Create/Read a schedule for pick-up and delivery. Make/Read postage rates. Weigh packages/read scale. Read a calendar and clock for on-time deliveries	<i>Collection of picture books about the postal service.</i> Play mailboxes Learning Mat Maps Mailbag Measurement scales Magnetic calendars Clocks

Print Awareness

Print Awareness refers to a person's understanding that printed text has meaning, is governed by a set of rules, and includes letters and words. Repetition and rhyming books, environmental print, and family literacy books are useful resources for supporting the following print awareness concepts:

Authors and Illustrators. Teach that an author is someone who writes the words in a book and an illustrator is someone who draws the pictures in a book. Open a book to a page that has both a picture and print. Ask, "What did the author do on this page? What did the illustrator do on this page?"

Orientation of the book. Teach the proper way to hold a book. Hand someone a book with the bound edge facing them and ask them to show you the "front of the book" and the "back of the book."

Directionality. Teach that reading occurs from left to right and from top to bottom. Open to a two-page spread that has more than one line of print on each page. Ask the person to point to where you should start reading. Ask where your eyes should look next. Ask where your eyes should look when they come to the end of the line.

Punctuation. Teach that punctuation adds meaning to the printed text. Point to a period, comma, exclamation point, and question mark and ask, "What is this?" "What should your voice do as you read this type of mark?"

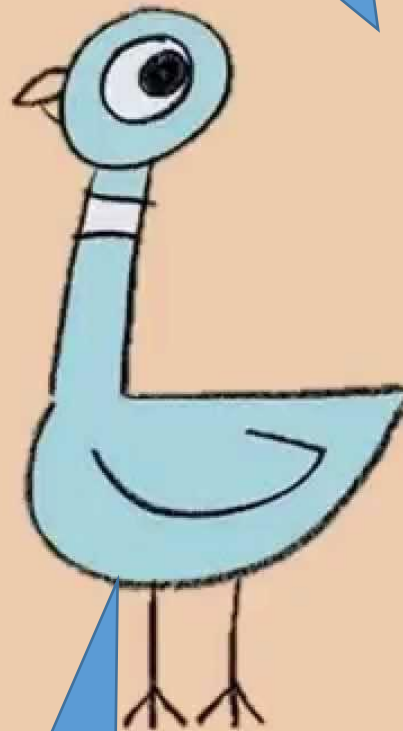
Concepts of Letter and Word. Teach that printed text includes letters, words, and phrases. Ask the person to use their index fingers to frame a letter. Then, ask the person to frame a word (i.e., use the index finger from the left hand and the index finger from the right hand to create a frame around some printed text). Next, ask the person to point to the words as you read the sentence again.

The **AUTHOR** wrote these words.
Read them from **LEFT** to **RIGHT**.

Front **COVER** of the book.

Don't
Let the
Pigeon
Drive
the
Bus!

by mo willems



Read the words with **EXCITEMENT**.

Turn the pages from
RIGHT to **LEFT**.

The **ILLUSTRATOR** drew this picture.

Phonological Awareness

Phonological Awareness refers to a person's understanding that language comprises words, syllables, rhymes, and sounds. Phonological awareness includes the ability to "play with sounds" by



breaking words into syllables,



taking away and/or adding a sound,



and putting sounds back together.

Repetition and Rhyming Books Support the Development of Phonological Awareness



Repetition and Rhyming Books Support **Word Awareness**

- Point to each word as it is being read. Show how a word with more than one syllable is still just one word.
- Pick a sentence from the story. Take one step forward for each word that you read.

Repetition and Rhyming Books Promote **Syllable Awareness**

- Tap, clap, or play the beats of syllables using your feet, hands, or an instrument.
- Sort story words with varying numbers of syllables.

Repetition and Rhyming Books Promote **Rhyme Awareness**

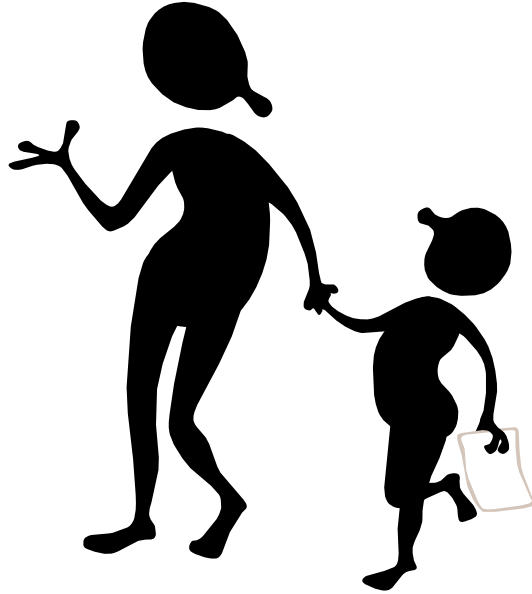
- Read a rhyming book. Point out rhyming words and discuss why they rhyme.
- Read the book again. This time, omit rhyming words and ask your child to fill in the blank. Think of other words that rhyme with the story words.

Repetition and Rhyming Books Promote **Sound Awareness**

- Clap, tap, or play an instrument every time they hear a word beginning with a target sound.
- Pretend that you are going to a Letter ? party. Think of things that begin with that letter to give as presents.

Narration

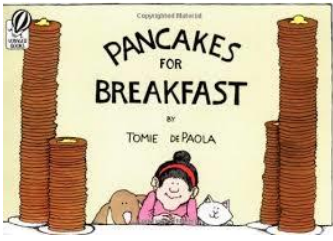
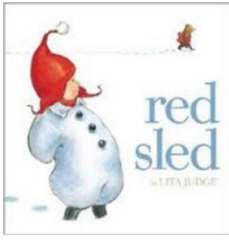
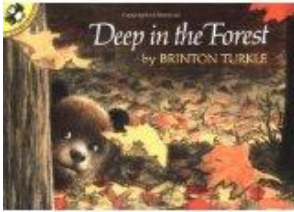
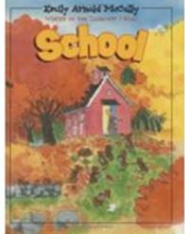
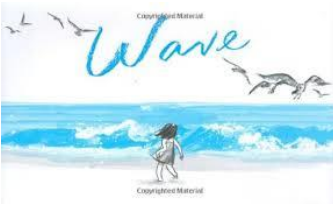
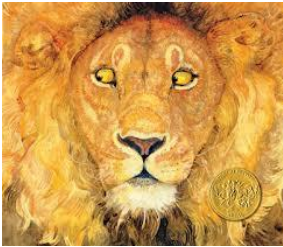
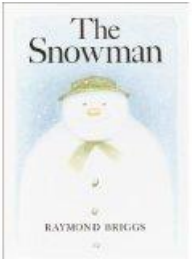
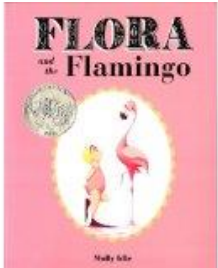
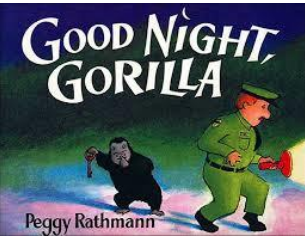
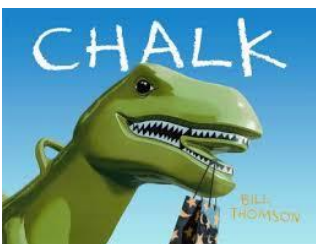
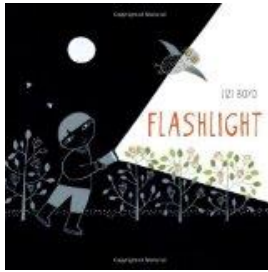
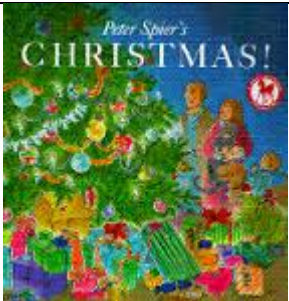
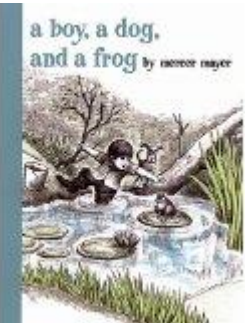
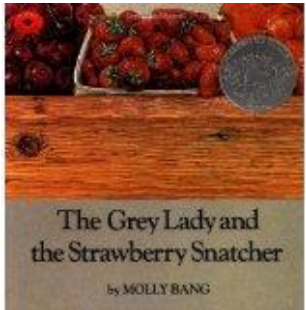
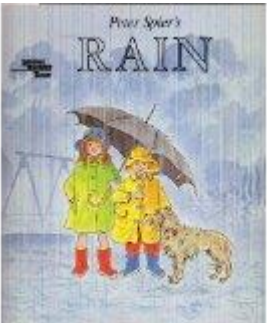
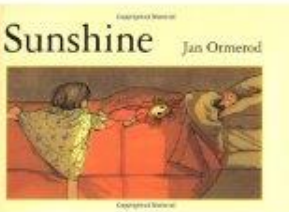
Narration refers to the ability to describe things and tell stories. Some of the best practices for supporting emergent narration skills include engaging others in conversations.



- Use sequencing to describe an event or to tell a story. For example, “First,... Next,... Last,...”
- Read short stories to show that stories have a beginning, middle, and end.
- Ask someone to tell you about something that happened today. Use prompts such as “What happened first? What happened next? What happened last?”
- Choose a familiar book. Ask, “What happens first? What happens next? What happens last?” Build upon responses and relate the story to personal experiences.
- Ask someone to tell a story using puppets, drawings, figures, flannel boards, costumes, or other props.
- Read a wordless picture book together.

Wordless Picture Books Support the Development of Narrative Skills

Wordless picture books that tell a simple story and appeal to the person's interests may be especially good resources for supporting the development of narration skills. The BU Toy Library: Language and Literacy Resource Center offers a collection of wordless picture books. Below are some examples:

 Pancakes for Breakfast by Tomie de Paola	 Red Sled by Lita Judge	 Deep in the Forest by Brinton Turkle	 School by Emily Arnold McCully
 Wave by Suze Lee	 The Lion and the Mouse by Jerry Pinkney	 The Snowman by Raymond Briggs	 Flora and the Flamingo by Molly Idle
 Good Night, Gorilla by Peggy Rathman	 Chalk by Bill Thomson	 Flashlight by Lizi Boyd	 Christmas by Peter Spier
 A Boy, a Dog, and a Frog by Mercer Mayer	 The Grey Lady and the Strawberry Snatcher by Molly Bang	 Rain by Peter Spier	 Sunshine (and Moonlight) by Jan Ormerod

