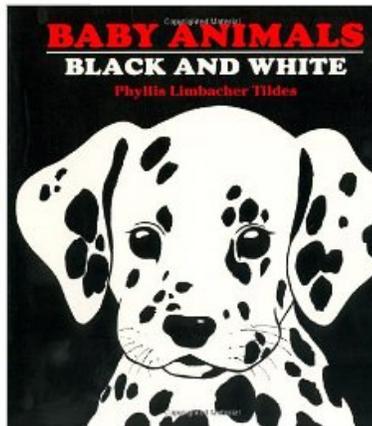


## DEVELOPING LITERACY TOOLS 1:



# Color & Contrast

During the first six months of their life, especially their first 3 months, babies are just beginning to practice focusing their eyes. Until this ability develops more fully, babies enjoy strong contrasts, as are found in black and white image books, and colorful books where primary colors practically leap off the page.

You can help your baby develop their eyesight by holding bold images about 8 to 10 inches from their eyes. At this distance, books can stimulate your baby's curiosity at the point where they are capable of focusing. Begin by holding books for your baby at this distance and then eventually allow your child to handle books on their own as they progress beyond month 3.

Board books are essential at this age because your child will mouth them, toss them, stack them and drop them, and these behaviors are all related to early literacy development!



## Creating a Language-Rich Environment

One of the best ways to help your baby develop language skills is to talk to them often and all day long!

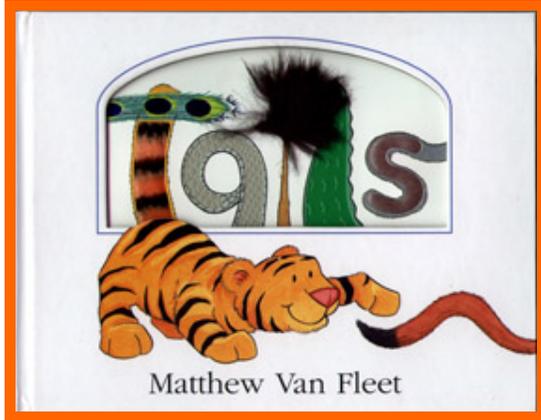
Describe where you are going and what you are doing. Point out simple items at home and name them for your baby.

Talk about what you see on a walk or in a book. Just by listening to your use of words everyday, your baby is learning all the vocabulary, grammar, and ideas he or she will need to speak successfully, too!



- *Black and White* by Tana Hoban
- *Sock and Shoe* by Frida Bing
- *Look, Look!* By Peter Linenthal
- *Very Hungry Caterpillar* or *Brown Bear* by Eric Carle
- *Bright Baby* and *My First Book* collections

## DEVELOPING LITERACY TOOLS 2:



# Texture

At birth , your baby's strongest sense is their sense of touch. Help engage your baby with books by utilizing this strength!

Many Touch & Feel books have incorporated textures from fur and feathers to burlap, plastic, and sandpaper. Model running your hand over the textures for your child and help them explore their favorites again and again.

Cloth and vinyl books, or bath books, are another great source of texture for your baby to experience. They are pet-able, squeezable, flexible — and to many a parent's joy — easily washable!

Part of allowing your baby to touch books means that they are going to throw them in piles, stomp them into the floor and then give them a good chew or two, so purchase heavy duty board books or cloth & vinyl books that will stand up to their demands. You can also visit the First 5 Inyo office at 568 W. Line Street (across from the Post Office) to select free used books for child anytime.



## Creating a Language-Rich Environment

One of the benefits of reading with your baby is snuggling close to share a book!

Your baby's brain sends out signals of pleasure and safety every time you hold them close. Hearing your voice not only lends comfort, but helps develop your baby's sense of language and their growing speech skills.

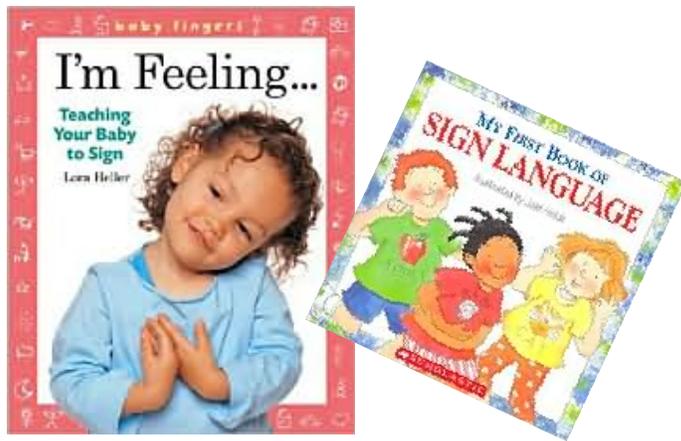
Take time every day to snuggle with a book or two — daily reading with a parent is the number one predictor of school readiness in young children.



### SUGGESTED BOOKS:

- Tails, Cat, or Dog touch-n-feel books by Matthew Van Fleet
- Bathtime pliable vinyl book by DK Publishing
- Bright Baby Touch & Feel Collection by Roger Priddy
- Opposites Cloth Book by OshKosh B'Gosh

## DEVELOPING LITERACY TOOLS 3:



# Gestures & Signing

Studies show that often children with the largest vocabularies at Kindergarten entry are children who use gestures and motion with their speech.

The link between communicating with our bodies and communicating with words is strong, and through gesture you may be able help your baby understand lots of complex concepts before they have developed the verbal ability to explain them back to you.

Babies naturally gesture and make sounds to indicate an object they want to play with, or some discomfort with their environment or options. Teaching children ways to communicate their needs effectively strengthens their reactive learning cycle with their parent or caregiver. This positive give & take may accelerate babies understanding of expressions & feelings, as well as opposite spatial concepts like in & out, up & down, and high & low.



## Creating a Language-Rich Environment

Always encourage your babies coos, growls, and giggles — they are your child's first verbal attempts at speech!

Praise your child when they mimic your tone, or when they babble in response to something you've said or done. The more your baby practices making sounds the more adept and clear their speech will become, so blah, blah, blah your way to books, books, books!

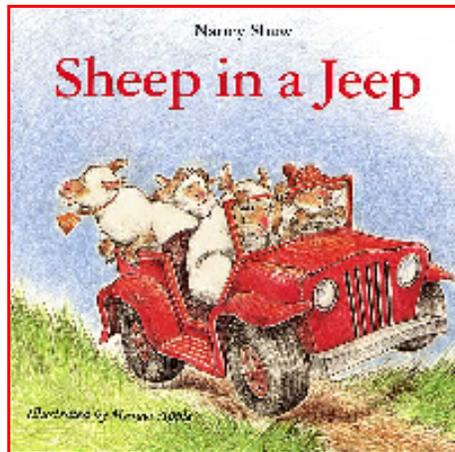
Babies also love it when you make sounds, so don't be afraid to buzz, moo, or quack your way through a book!



### SUGGESTED BOOKS:

- *Baby Fingers Collection*  
by Lora Heller
- *My First Book of Sign*  
by Joan Holub
- *This Little Lamb* or *This Little Doggie*  
by R. Powell
- *Baby Happy, Baby Sad*  
by Leslie Patricelli

## DEVELOPING LITERACY TOOLS 4:



# Rhyme & Alliteration

Another strong indicator of how well a child will do in school is their “phonemic awareness” when they start kindergarten. Phonemic awareness is really about your child’s sense of rhyme and alliteration — an almost innate understanding of the sounds of letters and words, and the rhythm of speech.

Alliteration is formed by repetitive consonant sounds. An example of alliteration would be “the cat curled up on the crunchy carpet.” This differs from rhymes like “the cat sat on the mat” where the vowel sounds repeat.

Many children who exhibit phonemic skills were simply bathed in language for most of their young lives. Growing up with daily reading and conversations helps children absorb a lingual rhythm and an ability to recognize similar sounds that is difficult to cultivate later in life. Choosing books that feature rhymes, songs, & alliteration will capture your baby’s attention, and his or her ear!



## Creating a Language-Rich Environment

Music and poetry really help develop an appreciation for The sounds of words and letters, as well as the way they are spoken.

As your child grows older you will find a plethora of games that reinforce their sense of the sounds of individual letters, but a great way to engage a baby in song is with gesture.

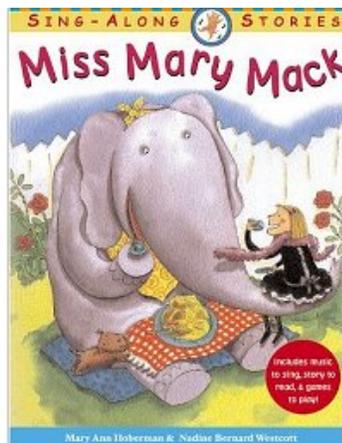
Playing pat-a-cake while rhyming, or moving your child’s limbs to the motions of row, row, row, your boat as you sing will catch your little one’s interest early on.



### SUGGESTED BOOKS:

- *Sheep in a Jeep*  
by Nancy Shaw
- *Clip Clop*  
by Nicola Smeer
- *Rockabye Farm*  
by Diane Johnston Hamm
- *Each Peach Pear Plum*  
by Janet and Allan Ahlberg
- *Jamberry*  
by Bruce Degen

## DEVELOPING LITERACY TOOLS 5:



# Musical Memory

Many studies have proven that children's memories are enhanced by music, and not just classical compositions. Find ways to incorporate all kinds of music into your everyday family life, and feel free to use music to set the mood or pace for regular activities in your schedule.

A universal example of this is picking a favorite lullaby that signals bedtime to your child, but you can also use music to help children transition between tasks or stay focused during them.

Just about every care provider knows that if they teach children to sing the cleanup song as every body pitches in to clear up the play space, not only do they get better participation from children who clearly understand how to act out the words of the song, but this song also helps the children mentally prepare for the fact that free play is over and a new activity is going to be starting soon.



## Creating a Language-Rich Environment

Expect to spend much of your time repeating the same books and songs over and over with your child. Repetition is an important part of their learning cycle and their delight needs to overrule your dread of reading the same story again.

Instead of fighting your child's interests look for ways to expand them. If you are sick of that pirate ship book, then go to the library (or the free used books in our office) and grab some related reading on tug boats and steamships, or maybe other kinds of transport like cars and planes. Finding ways fuel your child's natural interests helps them become a curious, lifelong learner.



### SUGGESTED BOOKS:

- *Miss Mary Mack and Other Children's Street Rhymes* by Joanna Cole
- *Peanut Butter & Jelly: A Song* by Nadine Bernard Westcott
- *Sing a Song of Popcorn* by Beatrice Shenk de Regniers
- *Itsy Bitsy Spider* or *Little Teapot* by Eliza Tripani

# Developmental Milestones of Early Literacy

Reach  
Out and  
Read®



## MOTOR:

## COGNITIVE:

## WHAT PARENTS CAN DO:

### 6–12 months



- reaches for book
- book to mouth
- sits in lap, head steady
- turns pages with adult help

- looks at pictures
- vocalizes, pats pictures
- prefers pictures of faces

- hold child comfortably; face-to-face gaze
- follow baby's cues for "more" and "stop"
- point and name pictures

### 12–18 months



- sits without support
- may carry book
- holds book with help
- turns board pages, several at a time

- no longer mouths right away
- points at pictures with one finger
- may make same sound for particular picture (labels)
- points when asked, "where's...?"
- turns book right side up
- gives book to adult to read

- respond to child's prompting to read
- let the child control the book
- be comfortable with toddler's short attention span
- ask "where's the...?" and let child point

### 18–24 months



- turns board book pages easily, one at a time
- carries book around the house
- may use book as transitional object

- names familiar pictures
- fills in words in familiar stories
- "reads" to dolls or stuffed animals
- recites parts of well-known stories
- attention span highly variable

- relate books to child's experiences
- use books in routines, bedtimes
- ask "what's that?" and give child time to answer
- pause and let child complete the sentence

### 24–36 months



- learns to handle paper pages
- goes back and forth in books to find favorite pictures

- recites whole phrases, sometimes whole stories
- coordinates text with picture
- protests when adult gets a word wrong in a familiar story
- reads familiar books to self

- keep using books in routines
- read at bedtime
- be willing to read the same story over and over
- ask "what's that?"
- relate books to child's experiences
- provide crayons and paper

### 3 years and up



- competent book handling
- turns paper pages one at a time

- listens to longer stories
- can retell familiar story
- understands what text is
- moves finger along text
- "writes" name
- moves toward letter recognition

- ask "what's happening?"
- encourage writing and drawing
- let the child tell the story