

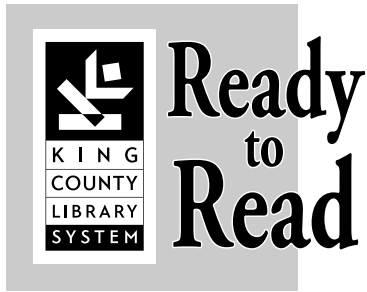


Ready to Read

**A Guide to Early Literacy Skills
for Parents and Caregivers of
Children, Newborn to Age 5**



www.kcls.org/readytoread



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Table of Contents

Introduction

Help Your Child Get Ready to Read.....	1
Guide for Developing Early Literacy Skills	3
Print Motivation.....	3
Print Awareness	4
Vocabulary.....	5
Narrative Skills.....	6
Letter Knowledge	7
Phonological Awareness	8

Books

The Baby BeeBee Bird	9
Big Black Bear	13
Caps for Sale.....	17
Chicka Chicka Boom	21
Corduroy	25
The Eentsy Weentsy Spider.....	29
Harry the Dirty Dog	33
A Hat for Minerva Louise	37
I Went Walking	41
Jump, Frog, Jump!	45
Mean Soup.....	49
“More, More, More,” Said the Baby	53
Mouse Paint.....	57
The Snowy Day.....	61
Ten, Nine, Eight.....	65

Resources

For More Information About Early Literacy...	69
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Help your child get ready to read.

Early Literacy is what children need to know about reading and writing before they can read and write.

It is never too early for children to develop skills they will need for a lifetime of learning. The booklet is a guide for parents and caregivers to help even very young children develop Early Literacy skills.

This booklet is a companion to the King County Library System's Ready to Read workshops. You'll find general information about Early Literacy, as well as questions and language games to go along with fifteen different children's books you can share with your child.

Reading regularly together and using the following simple learning techniques will help your child learn about written language and how to recognize letters as well as enjoy the experience of reading.

As always, the staff and resources of KCLS are available to help you and your family enjoy reading together. Visit www.kcls.org/readytoread for more information or call 425.369.3275.



“When you read with your child, you show them that reading is important, but you also show them they’re important—that they are so important to you that you will spend 20 minutes a day with your arm around them.”

Laura Bush, Moscow Children’s Book Festival, reported in Library and Information Update, November 2003

Read Aloud

Reading aloud with your child is the most important activity you can do to help your child prepare to enter school. Pick a book together. Read it together. Talk about the story. Read it together again. Children learn through repetition.

Read Often

Read aloud to your child every day. Choose a time when you both can enjoy sitting together, reading and listening, even for a few minutes. Have books handy so whenever you get a chance to read, you are ready!

Have Fun

Reading and language activities are a way to have fun together. Play with words using nursery rhymes, tongue twisters, songs and sounds. See the list on page 71 for books that play with words and pictures.

Play with Writing

Part of getting ready to read is learning that letters relate to sounds and sounds relate to things. Even very young children enjoy early writing activities. Let your child play with identifying and writing letters of the alphabet. Early “scribbles” show your child the relationship between the symbols on the page and the words we speak. These activities build motor and language skills and letter identification.

Surround Your Child with the Alphabet and Written Words

For the youngest children, have board and cloth books handy—even plastic books to read in the tub! As your child grows, make your own books together. Start with blank paper and add pictures on each page: family photos, pictures from magazines, or pictures you and your child draw together. Keep plenty of written materials on hand for your child to look at and read.

Long before they start school, children can learn pre-reading skills. You can help by following these simple guidelines.

Reading aloud with your child everyday is the most important thing you can do to help your child get ready to read.



Read more about the steps for developing each Early Literacy skill. Every moment you spend reading together will help your child become a ready reader.

Guide for Developing Early Literacy Skills

Ready to Read workshops and this manual will help you read with your child to master six essential Early Literacy skills:

1. **Print Motivation**—build interest in and enjoyment of books
2. **Print Awareness**—learn how letters and words appear on a page
3. **Vocabulary**—build vocabulary and connect words with things and ideas
4. **Narrative Skills**—put words together to express an idea or tell a story
5. **Letter Knowledge**—learn letters of the alphabet and how they sound
6. **Phonological Awareness**—learn and play with the smaller sounds in words

1. Print Motivation

Babies and young toddlers often have short attention spans and they enjoy repeating favorite activities. Read favorite stories and sing favorite songs throughout the day.

First

- Hold your child on your lap and look at the book together as you read in a pleasant voice.
- Share a book with your child every day; even a few minutes will make a difference.
- Make book-sharing a positive experience; read together when you are both in a good mood. Stop for a while if your child gets upset or loses interest.
- Talk about the words and pictures, sharing gentle contact the whole time, so reading feels good.
- Keep books handy in the toy box or on a shelf for your child to see and touch.

Then

- Make book-sharing a special time together as your child grows.
- Encourage your child when he “reads” along, even if his sounds don’t make sense.
- Let your child see that you enjoy reading, too.



2. Print Awareness

Help your child notice print on everyday items, learn to hold a book, and follow written words on a page. Developing print awareness includes showing your child the basic rules of written language:

Printed letters are associated with sounds.

Printed letters and sounds form words.

The letters on the page hold the stories you read.

Writing (in English) moves from left to right, top to bottom on a page.

First

- Read aloud print on everyday items such as cereal boxes, labels, signs, lists and menus.
- Have your child turn the pages as you read.

Then

- Point out signs and other words you see.
- Point to the words from time to time as you read, so your child understands that you are reading the text, not the pictures.
- Make a game of turning the book upside-down and let your child help you turn it to hold correctly.
- Using a book that your child knows well, have him point to letters or words as you read them.
- Let your child make his own book.



“The acquisition of a first language is the most complex skill anyone ever learns. And this task needs to be virtually complete by the time a child reaches school age.”

*David Crystal,
Cambridge Encyclopedia of Language, 1997*

3. Vocabulary

Children should enter school knowing 3,000 to 5,000 words. These simple techniques will help them build their language skills. Learning the names of things helps your child to associate words with meanings. Increasing children's vocabulary gives them the tools they need to refer to the people, places and things in their world and to express their own feelings.

First

- Talk to your child about what is happening around you.
- Use words to describe what your child is seeing or doing with you.
- Show your child everyday items, say the names of the items and talk about them.
- When you speak, pause to give your child a chance to respond.
- As you read together every day, be sure to talk about the words and the pictures, so your child understands the meanings and hears and learns more words.

Then

- When your child talks with you, ask for more details to encourage new vocabulary.
- Encourage your child when he pretends to read along.
- Share books about places and things outside of your familiar environment.
- Ask your child questions about the book you are reading together.
- Ask questions about the pictures that invite your child to respond.
- Ask your child to tell you about the story as you share a picture book that he knows well.



“The single most important activity for building the knowledge required for eventual success in reading is reading aloud to children.”

Becoming a Nation of Readers, 1985

4. Narrative Skills

As you continue to read aloud with your child, you help him learn to describe things and events, and develop the ability to tell stories from beginning to end.

First

- Speak the names of things you see around you and read about in the books you read together.
- Listen as your child tries to talk.
Be patient and attentive to even the earliest sounds.
- Narrate your day—tell your child what is going to happen or what you are doing.
- Repeat the words for things, actions, feelings and ideas.
- Tell your child stories you create or know.

Then

- Encourage your child to tell you about things they have done in sequence, for example, the steps involved in eating breakfast or what happened at a birthday party.
- Use books that tell a story in a sequence that is easy for your child to follow. When you have read the book together many times, your child can try to tell the story.
- Ask your child questions about the story that need answers using phrases and sentences, for example, “What do you think will happen when...”
- Re-read books together that your child already knows. Switch roles and listen while your child tells the story.
- Encourage your child to draw and tell you what is happening in the picture.
- Encourage your child to tell or act out a story using props, dolls or puppets.



5. Letter Knowledge

The letters of the alphabet are the building blocks of language. Children need to learn to name letters, to know they have sounds, to know that letters are different from each other, and to recognize them everywhere.

First

- Feel and talk about shapes. Play with balls, blocks and other three-dimensional toys.
- Look at ABC books together.
- Let your child explore how things are alike and different (size, shape, color).
- Point out and name letters in alphabet books, picture books, and on signs and labels.
- Write your child's name while your child watches, sounding it out while pointing at the letters.

Then

- Help your child write and read his name and other familiar words using magnetic letters, crayons or pencil and paper.
- Make letters from play dough.
- Provide more than one set of magnetic letters and encourage children to match the letters that are the same.
- Help your child learn the names of letters, the shapes of letters and the sound each letter makes.
- Look for food items that are alphabet letters (pasta, pretzels, etc.) and talk about the letters (and the sounds they make) as you eat them!

“Every child, to be educationally successful, needs a language-rich environment, one in which adults speak well, listen attentively, and read aloud every day.”

Ernest L. Boyer, Ready to Learn, 1991



6. Phonological Awareness

You can help your child learn to associate sounds with letters and syllables. As you practice, you are developing his ability to hear and play with the smaller sounds in words. Examples include: recognizing whether a series of words rhyme, being able to put word chunks (syllables) together to make a whole word, and being able to correctly say familiar words with sounds left out.

First

- Rhyming helps your child understand that words are made up of smaller parts.
- Say and read nursery rhymes so your child hears words that rhyme.
- Singing songs is a good way to help your child hear the syllables in words. In most songs each syllable in a word gets a different note. Songs and music help your child learn rhythm and how sounds break words into smaller parts. Sing with your child everyday. They love your voice!
- Play rhyming word games using silly words, too. Babbling is a great way to start.

Then

- Take time to listen to, focus on and talk about all kinds of sounds around you.
- Make a game of saying words slowly and quickly.
- Repeat tongue twisters.
- Play sound guessing games: “I am thinking of an animal and it is long and wiggly. It starts with the “S” sound.
- Read rhyming books and play rhyming games. (See examples on page 71.)
- Play with magnetic or foam letters and repeat the sound that each letter makes.
- Make a “train” of 3 to 5 magnetic letters and sound them out together.

Next, read how to use 15 different picture books to help your child develop Early Literacy skills.

