

## Ordinary activities and not-so-ordinary outcomes

*What does research tell us about the relationship between children's participation in everyday activities and their early literacy and language development?*

Participation in the everyday routines, activities, and experiences of their families' home and community lives can provide young children with rich and varied learning opportunities that promote early language and literacy development.

Researchers at the Center for Early Literacy Learning (CELL) were interested in identifying which of the hundreds of typical household and community activities in which a child might be involved were associated with acquiring different literacy and language abilities. Their focus was to achieve a better understanding of the ways parents are more likely to engage their young children in literacy-enhancing activities as part of including them in the routines of daily family life.

The researchers examined 30 studies—including 6,703 infants, toddlers, and preschoolers with and without disabilities or delays. Their analysis clearly showed that the frequency of children's participation in ordinary activities such as meal preparation, family outings, shopping trips, and household chores, contributed positively to the quality of their language and literacy learning.

The children's literacy-related outcomes included phonological awareness; rhyme production, detection, or knowledge; phoneme awareness and detection; and reading ability. The language-related outcomes included expressive language, verbal ability, and receptive language (including oral comprehension).

The particular everyday activities that were associated with the most positive child outcomes were library or bookstore visits, shared reading,

and alphabet and writing activities. The child outcomes that were most strongly associated with participation in everyday activities at home and in the community were letter and word knowledge, rhyming, verbal expression, and language comprehension.



**An ordinary trip to the market is filled with rich, highly engaging opportunities to see, hear, learn, and practice early language and literacy skills.**

This *CELLnotes* summarizes findings reported in Dunst, C. J., Valentine, A., Raab, M., & Hamby, D. W. (2013). Relationship between child participation in everyday activities and early literacy and language development. *CELLreviews* 6(1), 1-16.

# Acting on the Evidence

Download free, two-page *CELL* practices guides in versions for parents or practitioners at [www.earlyliteracylearning.org](http://www.earlyliteracylearning.org)

Child participation in everyday home, family, community, and preschool activities provides young children many opportunities to learn early language and literacy skills. All of the *CELL* practice guides that have been developed for parents and early childhood practitioners encourage the use of everyday learning in home, community, and classroom as sources of child learning activities. The two-page practice guides listed below are available for free download on the *CELL* project web site: [www.earlyliteracylearning.org](http://www.earlyliteracylearning.org). At this web address you can find multimedia practice guides such as videos that illustrate practices supported by research.

**Especially for parents of infants!**  
**Out and About**  
*Literacy Learning Experiences*

Parents often take their babies along to activities outside the home: food shopping, visiting relatives, attending an older sibling's ball games, taking out. Going to the library or book store, these kinds of activities provide opportunities for infants to become familiar with words and letters.

**What is the practice?**  
First, you want to expose your infant to symbols, signs, letters, words, books, and other familiar things, being different things when you're out and about will help your child learn to recognize familiar things.

**What does the practice look like?**  
A young mother takes her 10-month-old daughter to her older sister's birthday party. As they walk, she first points to a familiar shopping cart, a billboard with a picture of a dog, and a fast-food restaurant. Then she says the sign with the name of the soccer field, each hand to the other. "Look! Green Team Soccer." That's where we go for food, says the mother. "Four dog jumps is just like that." Labeling and pointing out familiar symbols and signs helps infants learn the connection between words and things that they see.

**How do you do the practice?**  
There are many sights and sounds in your child's neighborhood and community. These are opportunities to help infants learn meaningful signs and symbols with words. Here are some activities you might try when you're home with your child:

- Think of three or four things that your child sees often. They can be anything that is easy to recognize and especially interesting to a child. These are often places like a playground, supermarket, a relative's home, a fast-food restaurant, or a relative's house. Describe what you see to your child. ("There's Grandma's big blue house. Let's go see Grandma!")
- Anytime you and your child are in a familiar place, pick three or four things that are visible especially in that place. These might be cereal boxes, fruit, all of the vegetables, milk, and eggs. Let your child touch and name the familiar objects or foods. Describe and name the items for you.
- First take or three community or neighborhood places that your child especially enjoys. This can be anything from a duck pond, a public library, book store, or playground. Think of activities you can do in each of these places to engage your child in interactions with you.

**more out-and-about activities**

**he Bus**  
John told the bus to go and get some lunch. On his sight, there include church, a playground, a mother holds him anything on the go by. Mom describes what she sees. "Do you see...?" These questions are a kind of game that looks forward to his mother.

**troll and Chat**  
Alex's father and mother push their 5-month-old son down the street in a stroller on their way to the supermarket. Along the way, to see many things to look at and talk about. They point out trees, flowers, animals, people, cars, and so much to Mom and Dad name and talk about the things they see when home and the store. Whenever Alex sees something catches his attention, he reaches out, gestures toward it, babbles. His parents stop and talk about what got Alex excited. He refers closely to what Dad and Mom are saying to him. How does this make to the store, the more Alex notices the things that are interesting to him.

Like's favorite 'not all independent' Mom uses the fact that he's going on, recognizes what Mom talks like. "That's what she holds up the or hand-point to things and saying more than 50

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**Especially for practitioners working with toddlers!**  
**Exploring Magazines and Catalogs**  
*Alphabet Awareness*

Before children are able to read, they must understand that letters and words are symbols used to capture spoken words. This practice guide includes activities to develop toddlers' understanding that letters and words are symbols with meaning. This is an important building block for later reading.

**What is the practice?**  
This includes pictures, letters and words. Toddlers make the connection between print and what the print represents by pointing to pictures and saying the word. Adults can help by pointing to the pictures and saying the word. They also describe the relationship between the words and the pictures. Toddlers learn that print carries meaning and that meanings change when different pictures, words, and letters are used. Children must understand that print carries meaning before they can learn to read words and understand what they mean.

**What does the practice look like?**  
Seeing the print and its meaning are needed to happen when you and a toddler look at pictures of things. These catalogs, magazines, etc., and talk about what the words and pictures mean. Let toddlers use these kinds of printed materials in ways that have meaning to them. For example, they might like to cut out pictures or words. They can glue them on paper to make simple stories or drawings.

**How do you do the practice?**  
Toddlers can learn about print in a world of different ways. Looking through magazines, catalogs, books, newspapers, or catalogs and "reading" signs along the road are a few of the ways.

- Start by finding which type of printed material is most interesting to the toddler. Some children are attracted to colorful pictures, while others are drawn to paper that has a clear text.
- There are many activities you can do with print. In a picture show, let your toddler find pictures in a picture show. Let your toddler find pictures in a picture show. Let your toddler find pictures in a picture show.

**How do you know the practice worked?**

- Does the toddler want to look at and talk about magazines or shopping lists with you?
- Does the toddler seem pleased about his or her print?
- Does the toddler use print to "read" printed materials?
- Does the toddler use print to label the world and print in magazines or lists?

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**at more magazines and catalogs and Talk!**  
Anna, who teaches a classroom of 2-year-olds, works closely with her early childhood consultant. They have been taking about how to offer more opportunities for her children to interact with printed materials. Anna comes up with the idea of putting catalogs in each of the centers in her classroom. She put picture cards in the play kitchen and a few from a home building store in the blocks corner. She found a few book catalogs for the reading nook. Anna and her assistant print these out to children when they are playing in the various centers. She asks the children questions such as "What's on the page?" and "What does this mean?" They encourage the children to look at the pictures and print and to make pretend shopping lists.

**Free Activity-Specific Print**  
Anna, who teaches a classroom of 2-year-olds, works closely with her early childhood consultant. They have been taking about how to offer more opportunities for her children to interact with printed materials. Anna comes up with the idea of putting catalogs in each of the centers in her classroom. She put picture cards in the play kitchen and a few from a home building store in the blocks corner. She found a few book catalogs for the reading nook. Anna and her assistant print these out to children when they are playing in the various centers. She asks the children questions such as "What's on the page?" and "What does this mean?" They encourage the children to look at the pictures and print and to make pretend shopping lists.

**Play Card**  
Art Table  
Toys  
Books  
Books

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## Especially for PARENTS

- Infants:**  
*Out and About*  
*Places To Go and People To See*  
*World of Words*
- Toddlers:**  
*Books and Crayons of One's Own*  
*Act Natural*  
*Magic of Catalogs and Magazines*
- Preschoolers:**  
*Write Right*  
*Mail Call*  
*Word Wise*

## Especially for PRACTITIONERS

- Infants:**  
*Literacy-Rich Classroom and Community Activities*  
*Literacy-Rich Home Activities*  
*Literacy-Rich Outings*
- Toddlers:**  
*World of Learning*  
*Words All Around Us*  
*Exploring Magazines and Catalogs*
- Preschoolers:**  
*A Place for Writing*  
*Keyboarding with Kids*  
*Words Everywhere*