

Especially for practitioners working with infants!

Literacy-Rich Home Activities

Literacy-Rich Experiences

Infants become interested in reading, writing, and talking through literacy-rich experiences. These can occur in their everyday lives at home and in child care. This practice guide includes ways to fill a home with opportunities to learn the joys of books, stories, conversation, and much more.

What is the practice?

Give children the chance to play with and read books and “talk” to others. Let them join in fingerplays, and play other sound and word games. Doing so provides infants with the building blocks for learning to read, write, and talk. The term for all these kinds of opportunities is literacy-rich experiences.

What does the practice look like?

Imagine an infant sitting on an adult’s lap and reading a book or an infant and parent playing “So Big.” Picture a child in a highchair at the dinner table as she listens to her older siblings talk about school. Think about an infant finger drawing in pudding or yogurt. These are just a few of the kinds of activities that make up literacy-rich home experiences.



How do you do the practice?

This practice is about getting children involved in activities and opportunities that create interests in reading, talking, and writing. These should be things the baby finds fun and interesting. Do not overdo it. A few highly interesting activities are better than doing many uninteresting things.

- Store-bought and homemade picture books, ABC or talking books and photo albums will all create an interest in stories.
- Read to the child as often as he seems interested. Let him take part in reading a well-liked book by encouraging his touching, pointing, showing, and talking.
- Play lap games and fingerplays. Sing nursery rhymes and made-up songs while you play with the child.
- Talk to the child while you are doing routine activities like getting him dressed or making his meals. Involve him in conversations you are having with other people. Ask simple questions like “What do you think about that?” It isn’t important that the child know what is being said. What you want to do is make him part of the activity.
- Allow the child to draw with his fingers using pudding, yogurt, finger paints, and other items. Involve him in your routines like seeing you make a shopping list or write a note or letter.
- Encourage the child to play with ABC toys that make sounds when they are shaken or dropped.

How do you know the practice worked?

- Does the child try to communicate using sounds or gestures?
- Does the child show he is looking forward to the “next words” in a story or rhyme?
- Does she show interest in trying to draw with her fingers?

Take a look at more fun home activities

A Bevy of Books

Susan became interested in books and other reading materials shortly after she could reach and hold things with both hands. Susan likes to look at pictures of familiar things. She enjoys having mom or her home visitor read her stories. Susan's mom wants to promote her interest in books and reading. She makes sure that Susan has lots of daily opportunities to play with reading materials. Susan's home visitor has helped Mom find lots of fun types of books and other things to read. They now have board books, cloth books, homemade picture albums, magazines, talking books, and other reading and storytelling materials. They keep them in a plastic bin where they are easy for Susan to reach. Mom watches for times to use Susan's interests when she reads to her or tells her stories. Mom involves her as much as she can in these activities.



Scads of Scribbling

At 11 months old, Landon has become especially interested in watching Amy, his caregiver, when she draws and writes. Amy tries to find all kinds of ways that Landon can be part of these activities. She encourages him to try to "write" on his own. He may only be able to scribble, but Landon likes sitting next to Amy and "writing." Amy lets him use crayons and magic markers while they are both writing a note or making a shopping list. Landon also gets to finger draw with finger paints on the kitchen table. He scribbles with big pieces of chalk on the pavement outside and "writes" in wet sand at the sand table. As Landon is doing any of these things, Amy talks about them, describes them, and asks Landon questions. She always likes to keep him involved in all of these prewriting activities.

Games and Rhymes

Eight-month-old David, who is blind, and 14-month-old Sarah, who cannot hear, still enjoy lap games, nursery rhymes, and fingerplays. Any one of these kinds of activities provides lots and lots of chances to listen to sounds and words. They help the children interact with parents and other people, and learn the basics of back-and-forth conversation. Through these activities the children learn to communicate wants and needs using gestures and sign language. Ali, David's and Sarah's home interventionist, involves the children in many of these play activities. As they play, Ali talks about all that is going on. She uses simple words and phrases and sign language that David and Sarah have learned to understand.

