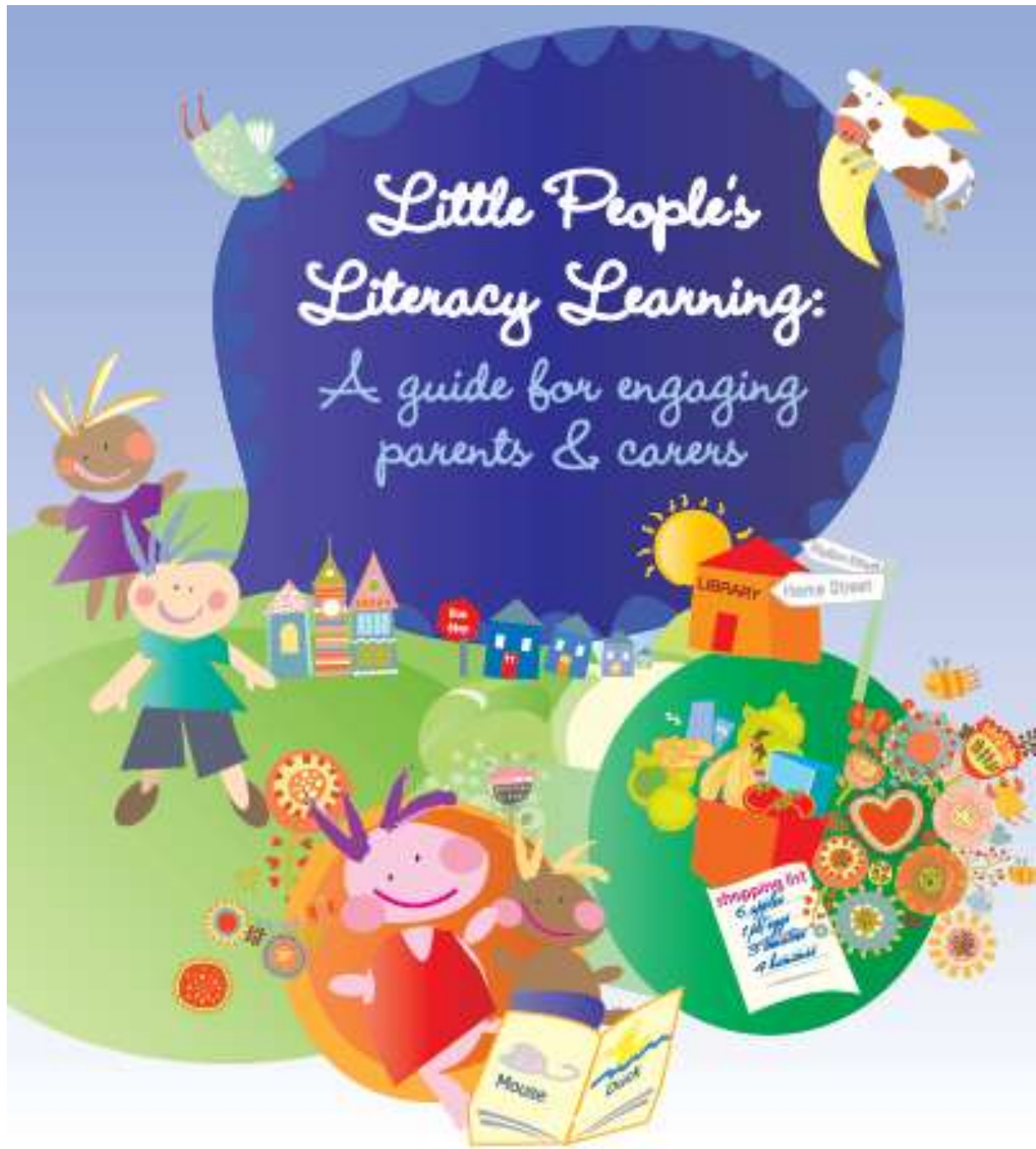




How to be a talking, reading, writing, viewing, and listening family

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There are several practical things parents can do to encourage broad literacy and learning in early childhood years.

1. Don't wait. Read what you are reading aloud to your new-born. Children become attuned to the sound of your voice and the tones of the language you speak as their hearing develops.
2. Share stories at mealtime. Provide prompts like: "Tell us what your teddy did today". Alternatively, randomly select from ideas for characters, problems, and settings, for example: "Tell us about an inquisitive mouse lost in a library". [Oral storytelling](#) provides a bridge to written stories.
3. Record on your phone or write down your child's stories. Turn them into a book, animation, or slide show (with an app). Children will see the transformation of their spoken words into written words. These stories can be revisited to reinforce learning of words, story structure and grammar.
4. Talk about their experiences. For example, prompt them to describe something they have done, seen, read or heard about. [Research shows](#) children's oral language supports their literacy development, and vice-versa.
5. Guide literacy in your children's play, following their lead. For example, help them follow instructions for making something, or use texts in pretend play, such as menus in play about a pizza place. Children will engage with various texts and the purposes they have in their lives.
6. Books, books, books. For babies and toddlers, start with durable board books of faces, animals and everyday things with few words that invite interactivity (e.g., "Where is baby?"). Progress to more complex picture books with rhyming language. Talk about personal links with the stories and ask questions (such as "I wonder what will happen next or where they went to") as these will support comprehension. Look to the [Children's Book Council](#) for awarded quality children's literature.
7. Talk about words children notice. Be sure the words make sense to children. Talk about what words look like, what patterns, letters and sounds they make. This builds children's word recognition and attack skills, and understanding of what words in context mean.
8. Involve your children in activities where you use literacy. For example, if you make shopping lists or send e-cards, your children could help create these with you. Explain what you are doing and invite children's participation (e.g., "I'm looking at a map to see how to get to your friend's house"). Children can meaningfully engage with and create texts and see the place these texts have in their lives.
9. Use community and state libraries. Most offer interactive family literacy programs. [Early Years Counts](#) and The Australian Literacy Educators Association has a [range of resources](#) for families.

It is preferable that you **use standard words** and eliminate baby language.

Please **listen to your child**, allowing time for him or her to speak. Preferably get down to your child's level, look at your child face-to-face and make eye contact. Your child will then know that you are giving him or her, your full attention.

Promote development of your child's language **by providing opportunities for your child to talk** to other children and adults independently of you. For example, at the supermarket you might say: 'Please go and ask that lady where the eggs are' or something similar. It's probably best if it's a supermarket employee. Teach your child to say 'Excuse me, could you tell me where the eggs are please?' This activity helps to build confidence when speaking to others outside the home.

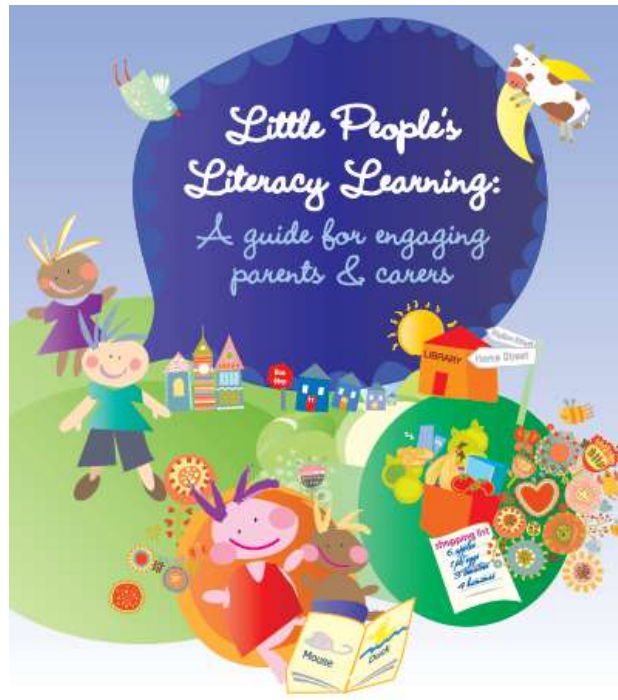
It is a good idea to **talk to your child about experiences** unrelated to the home setting. For example: 'What was that new film about?', 'What can you tell me about the zoo visit with Grandma?', 'What was special about your friend's party?' or 'We had a great time at the beach. What did you enjoy the most?'

**** At times, allow your child to answer the home telephone or mobile phone**, using a set pattern such as 'Hello, who's calling please?' if the caller is known.

You can **have discussions** at meal-times and during social outings, e.g. 'What can we do tomorrow? Where shall we go? Who has some ideas?' or 'What can we do for Nanna's birthday?'

You can **be selective about what your child watches. Sit with your child and talk about worthwhile programs or films**. Have other activities available, e.g. dice games, card games, dominoes, tic-tac-toe and jigsaw puzzles which you can talk about. Puzzles have come a long way in design and pictures and now are fantastic, especially for older children. There are some available in black and white kaleidoscope designs which are able to be coloured, with the coloured pencils included.

It is a good idea to encourage your child to **answer his or her own questions and do not answer for him or her immediately**. Say: 'What do you think it would be?'



Listening

The following suggestions may be useful in helping your child to gain effective listening skills. Listening skills are important for gaining knowledge and information and communicating with others.

Tell and read stories to your child.

Share rhymes with your child - make up some funny or nonsense rhymes too!

Let your child listen to known callers on the telephone, such as relatives and friends.

Talk and sing to and with your child. Use any opportunity to do so. Make these fun activities. If you play a guitar, sit on the edge of the bath and play and sing with the children while they are in the bath.

Describe or comment on actions being carried out every day as they are occurring e.g. cooking, cleaning, gardening, putting out the rubbish, or shopping. For example, 'We are going to put 3 cups of flour into the bowl so let's count them.' Or 'Now I am going to wrap up the rubbish then I am going to put it into the rubbish bin. We will wheel it out to the street so that the rubbish man can come with his big rubbish truck. The truck will pick up our bin, empty it into the truck and take our rubbish away to the rubbish tip.'



Talk at mealtimes, bath times, bedtime, etc. Make up stories for your child to listen to while in the bath or in bed. Children love made-up stories when they are young. Stories are great because you can end with a moral or a lesson to learn.

Watch together and comment on suitable TV programs and commercials with your child. 'What did the girl do that was funny?' 'Would you like to be that boy? Why?'

Use eye contact to give your child one instruction to remember and carry out. When your child is ready, give two instructions, then three instructions. Make sure that your child

understands what it is that you want him or her to do. When necessary, have your child tell you what it is they need to do. Do not reprimand if your child has not understood your instructions, as your child may not be ready for the number of instructions you are giving. One instruction: 'Can you get me two pegs, please? (Hold up two fingers)'. Two instructions: 'Please fetch me a nappy for the baby then go and close the back door.'

Listen for the same words in a story. Your child needs to know that the *same word* has the *same meaning* in a story.

Read the same story more than once - children really enjoy listening to their favourite stories over and over.

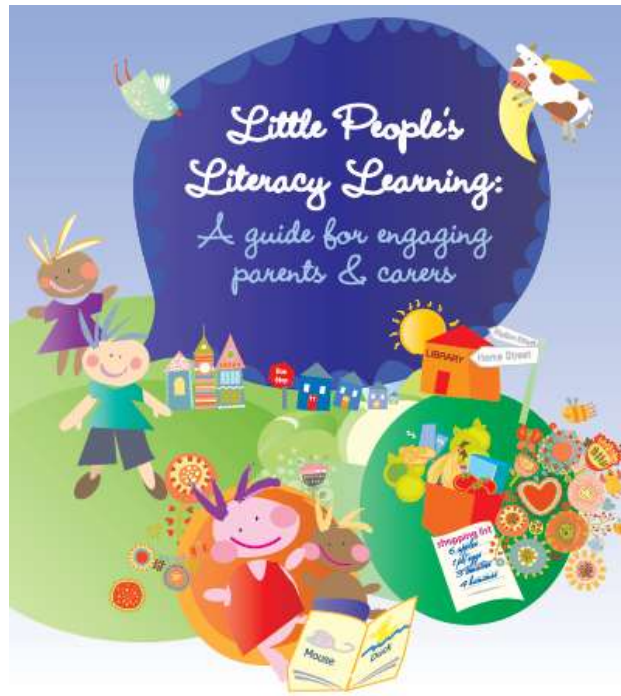
Choose one word - begin with a noun (such as 'dog'). Ask your child to clap or call out when he or she hears that word again as you re-read the story.

Encourage your child to say single words and repeated phrases or sentences as you re-read the story, e.g. 'I'll huff and I'll puff and I'll blow your house down' from *The Three Little Pigs*.

Allow your child to finish the word in a line from a rhyming couplet in a story:
As I was walking to the town all the leaves were falling.... (Down).

Dr Seuss books, poetry books and nursery rhymes are great for this rhyming fun.

Allow your child to socialise as much as possible with children outside the family. Children learn much about language and learn to share and co-operate when talking to, listening to, and playing with other children. Broaden your child's exposure to different languages too. The goal is not language fluency but a greater appreciation of the variation of language sounds and ways of making meaning.



Talk for writing

Family Photos

Looking at photos together is a great way to get conversation flowing. Your child will be fascinated by pictures of themselves when they were little and old family albums from before they were born.

Practice makes perfect

Encourage your child to talk to 'safe' adults when you're out and about, for example greeting friends' parents, paying for something in a shop, or asking for something at the supermarket.

Play back

Use a phone or a tablet to enable your child to record and listen to their voice.

Discussions

When you read a story or watch a TV programme, ask them how the characters are feeling, and why.

Puppet play

Try some puppet play. Speaking to or through a hand puppet can encourage children to voice ideas.

Picture books

Picture books that is particularly good for promoting discussion.

Puzzles

Encourage your child to describe the puzzle. Let them create their own story/discussion based on that puzzle.

Libraries

Take your child to the libraries. Let them choose their own books of their interests.

Talking together

At the end of the day, encourage your child to talk about what they've done and perhaps to recount it back to someone - mum or dad coming in from work or grandma on the phone, for instance.

Coping with "why?"

If your child's favourite word is "why", turn it back at them with: "Well, why do you think?"

Talking

Talk to your child as much as possible and 'feed' them new and ambitious vocabulary.

"Let's eat our lunch now."

"Let's munch our lunch now."

"Let's scoff our lunch now."

"Let's devour our lunch now!"

Vocabulary

Enrich conversations through description:

"Look at that rain. It looks like little diamonds sparkling on the window pane!"

Have fun with words and language.

"I'm as hot as a spud in a cooking pot!"

Praise your child for using new words or interesting phrases.