

Play with me!

Young children learn best when they are actively engaged in something they enjoy and when they get to repeat it over and over. In other words, they learn best when they are playing! Here are a few examples of how adults can be supportive play partners for young children and also teach them important reading and writing concepts as they play together.

Read and recite poems together. After your child has heard a poem many times, hesitate and let your child fill in the rhyming words. Another time, say the wrong rhyme. For example: "Hickory dickory dock, The mouse ran up the sock...SOCK?" Laugh and correct it together. This teaches your child that words are made up of sounds and that changing a sound, changes the meaning of the word. Play with rhymes whenever you can and have fun!



Name things accurately and use rich vocabulary as you play with your child. For example, as you kick around a ball, you might say, "Good kick! Let's both play forward and pass the ball back and forth." Or, "You be the striker. I'll play goalie." This teaches your child the specific vocabulary and sentence structure of activities that are important to you and him/her. When your child begins to read and sees these words in print, they will be familiar and support their reading and writing development.

As you pretend with your child, suggest opportunities to write and pretend-write. For example, you might say, "Before we take the dollies to the grocery store, we could make a shopping list. Let's get a paper and marker and write what we want to buy..., chips...sal-sa... piz-za...ap-ples..." When you write as your child watches, say the words and write at your natural speed. This teaches your child that writing is useful in our everyday lives. When you write with your child, he/she wants to copy you and be a writer, too!



For More Information

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Madison Public Library
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Dane County UW Extension
Madison Area Literacy Council

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