



Five Books, Five Literacy-Building Ideas!

By Andrea Lynn Koohi

Hanen staff writer

One of the most important things you can do to prepare your child for school success is to help her develop early literacy skills. These skills are the “tools” your child needs to learn to read and write, so the more early literacy skills she has now, the better prepared she’ll be for school.

Here are some fun tips for building the five critical early literacy skills your child needs to learn: **oral language, vocabulary, story comprehension, print knowledge, and sound awareness.**

1. Oral Language

When you pause during book reading to talk about the story and what interests your child, you provide her with lots of opportunities to think and talk about the story, which builds her comprehension and her oral language skills – key foundations for literacy success.

Tip:

Ask questions about the things that interest your child



Slinky Malinki by Lynley Dodd is about a sneaky cat who steals things from neighbours during the night. Observe your child closely to see how she reacts to the things Slinky does, and then make a comment or ask a question. For example, if your child laughs when

Slinky steals a string of sausages, you could ask, “Where do you think he’s going to put all those sausages?”

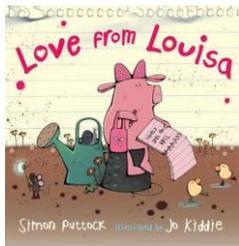
Remember to be enthusiastic and wait expectantly for your child to respond.

2. Vocabulary

The more words children understand as preschoolers, the better their reading comprehension will be later on. You can build your child’s vocabulary by stressing new words, talking about what the word means and relating it to your child’s experience.

Tip:

Introduce a new word by relating it to your child’s experience



Love from Louisa by Simon Puttock is about a *disgruntled* pig who threatens to leave her farm if the farmer doesn’t clean it up. This book provides a great opportunity to help your child learn a new word: ‘disgruntled’.

Explain what the word means by using simpler words your child already knows (for example, “Disgruntled’ means she’s really unhappy and grouchy”) and relating the word to your child’s experience (for example, “Do you remember how *disgruntled* you were when we had to cancel our trip to the zoo because it was raining?”). Remember to stress the word as you say it.

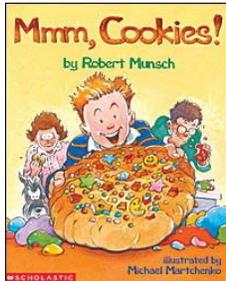
3. Story Comprehension

Talking about the important parts of a story (for example, the characters, setting, problem, actions, and resolution) makes it easier for your child to make sense of the story, and it

prepares her for understanding the stories she will read later on.

Tip:

Get your child thinking about the problem in the story



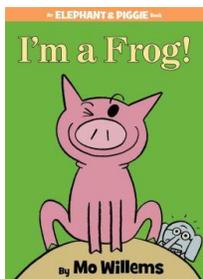
Mmm, Cookies by Robert Munsch is a story with a big problem: Christopher is making cookies out of clay and giving them to people to eat! Encourage your child to think about the **problem** by asking him what he would do in a similar situation. For example, “Oh, no, Christopher gave clay cookies to his parents and now he might try to give some to his classmates! What would *you* do if Christopher gave you a clay cookie?”

4. Print Knowledge

There are many things your child must learn about print before she can read and write on her own. For example, she’ll need to know that print represents spoken language and that print is read from left to right. As you read with your child, you can point out and talk about some of these print ideas to help your child learn.

Tip:

Point out print for your child



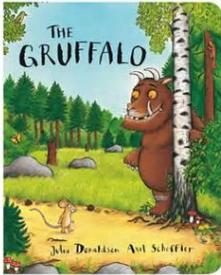
I'm a Frog! by Mo Willems is about two friends, Piggy and Gerald, who discover how much fun it is to pretend. Since this book is full of speech balloons, it gives you many opportunities to talk about how the text in the balloons shows what the characters are saying. Point to a speech balloon and say, “Look, we read this to find out what Piggy is saying.”

5. Sound Awareness

To be prepared to read, children must understand that words can be broken down into smaller sounds, and that letters correspond to certain words. Sound awareness prepares your child for reading by making it easier for her to sound out the words she will read later on.

Tip:

Talk about the sounds that letters make



The Gruffalo by Julia Donaldson is about a clever little mouse who outsmarts all the other animals in the forest with the story of a big scary “gruffalo”. This book offers great opportunities to build your child’s sound awareness because it’s full of alliteration (back-to-back words beginning with the same sound).

Point out two words that start with the same sound and ask your child to think of another word that starts with that sound. For example, “Look, ‘scrambled’ and ‘snake’ both start with the sss sound. Listen. *Ssscrambled ssssnake*. Can you think of another word that starts with the sss sound?” Remember to talk about the *sound* the letter makes rather than the name of the letter.

What Else Can You Do to Help Your Child Learn?

Whenever you spend time sharing books with your child, you’re helping to build her early literacy skills. But frequent book reading is just one part of helping your child learn – exactly *how* you share the book also makes a difference.

Fill out this Book Reading Checklist to take a look at how you’ve been sharing books with your child and what other things you can do to maximize her learning.

[Book Reading Checklist](#)

The Hanen Centre is a Canadian not-for-profit charitable organization with a global reach. Its mission is to provide parents, caregivers, early childhood educators and speech-language pathologists with the knowledge and training they need to help young children develop the best possible language, social and literacy skills. This includes children who have or are at risk for language delays, those with developmental challenges such as autism, and those who are developing typically.

For more information, visit www.hanen.org