



**Wee Readers!**

**Smart start activity guide**

## Smart Start Skills

- **Sound Awareness**

The ability to hear and play with the smaller sounds in words.

- **Vocabulary**

Knowing the names of things.

- **Print Motivation**

A child's interest in and enjoyment of books.

- **Narrative Skills**

The abilities to describe the events and to tell stories.

- **Print Awareness**

Noticing print, knowing how to handle a book, and how we follow the written word on a page.

- **Letter Knowledge**

Learning to name letters and to recognize them everywhere.

**According to research, these are six skills that children need before they start school in order to learn to read.**

- Activities you do to support each of these skills will change as your child grows.
- Ask at your public library about programs for you and your child.
- Ask for more suggestions on ways to help your child.

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## Smart Start Activities for Preschoolers

### **Vocabulary:**

Read a true (non-fiction) book about something your child likes. Explain any words that are unfamiliar to your child. Look at a picture dictionary together.

### **Print Motivation:**

Let your child choose which book to read next. Make cookies or a snack together by using a recipe. Point out that being able to read the recipe is necessary for making the goodies.

### **Narrative Skills:**

Ask your child to tell you about something that happened earlier, whether it's lunch or a trip to the zoo. Read a favorite story together, but reverse roles. Ask your child to tell the story while you listen.

### **Sound Awareness:**

Say a familiar rhyme or make up a silly rhyme together. Sing a song. Songs often have different notes for each syllable in a word.

### **Letter Knowledge:**

Make letters from play dough. Write words that interest your child (such as "dinosaur" or "cat") using crayons, magnetic letters, or pencil and paper.

### **Print Awareness:**

While reading to your child, hold the book upside down. See if your child notices. Point out the print on familiar objects, such as street signs or household items.

## Smart Start Activities

Research shows that there are six skills that all children need to learn before they start school to be ready to learn how to read. Throughout this booklet, there are educational activities that will help your child develop skills needed for reading. On these pages, you will find three developmental levels for each of these skills.

### **The three levels are:**

- **Babies:** Infants to toddlers up to 2 years old, who cannot yet communicate with words.
- **Talkers:** 2 and 3 year old children who can interact and communicate with 50 words or more.
- **Preschoolers:** 3, 4 and 5 year olds who are not yet in school, but are eager to learn.

## Smart Start Activities for Babies

### **Vocabulary:**

Talk with your baby about what is going on around you. When you read to your baby, point to the pictures and name the things you see.

Speak in the language that is most comfortable for you. Ask your baby lots of questions. Even a child who is too young to answer can learn that questions are invitations for a response.

### **Print Motivation:**

Make book sharing a special time for the two of you. Cuddle your little one as you read.

### **Narrative Skills:**

Talk to your child about what you are doing throughout the day. Read favorite books again and again.

### **Sound Awareness:**

Read nursery rhymes and emphasize the rhyming words. Singing songs is a good way to help your child hear the syllables in words. In many songs, each syllable in a word gets a different note.

### **Letter Knowledge:**

Help your baby see and feel different shapes as you play. For example, say, "The ball is round." Read alphabet books. Point out letters on toys, in books, and on objects around the house.

### **Print Awareness:**

If you are using cloth or board books, let your baby hold the book as you read.

## Smart Start Activities for Talkers

### **Vocabulary:**

When your child talks to you, add some more details. For example, if your child says "dog" then you say, "Yes, a big yellow dog."

Talk about what is going on around you. Name objects and colors you see.

### **Print Motivation:**

Cuddle your child as you read. Let your child choose which story to read.

### **Narrative Skills:**

Ask your child to tell you about something that happened earlier in the day, whether it's lunch or a trip to the zoo. Read a favorite book, but switch roles – you be the listener and let your child tell you the story.

### **Sound Awareness:**

Play a rhyming game. Work together to list all the words that rhyme with "cat".

Sing a song. Songs often have different notes for each syllable in a word, so children can hear the different sounds in words.

Choose a letter sound and spend an afternoon noticing everything that starts with that sound.

### **Letter Knowledge:**

Make letters out of play dough or play with magnetic letters. Read an alphabet book and point out the shapes of the letters. Eat alphabet soup and point out the letters in your child's name.

### **Print Awareness:**

Let your child hold the book and turn the pages