MILESTONES OF EARLY LITERACY DEVELOPMENT

Babies learn best from caring adults. From birth, it’s important for parents to notice and respond to what interests their child. Reading aloud and talking together every day creates secure relationships and a strong foundation for learning. Books should be part of every family’s naptime, playtime, and bedtime routines.

### 6 TO 12 MONTHS

**Motor Development**
What your child is doing
- Holds head steady
- Sits in lap without support
- Grasps book, puts in mouth
- Drops, throws book

**Communication and Cognition**
What your child is saying and learning
- Smiles, babbles, coos
- Likes and wants your voice
- Likes pictures of baby faces
- Begins to say “ma”, “ba”, “da”
- Responds to own name
- Pats picture to show interest

**Anticipatory Guidance**
What parents can do
- Ask questions and wait for your child to answer
- Read and speak in your first language
- Talk back and forth with your baby; make eye contact
- Cuddle, sing, talk, play, read
- Point at and name things: nose, ball, baby, dog...
- Follow baby’s cues for “more” or “stop”
- Play games such as “peek-a-boo” or “pat-a-cake”

**What to Read**
- Board and cloth books; books with baby faces; nursery rhymes

### 12 TO 24 MONTHS

**Motor Development**
What your child is doing
- Holds and walks with book
- No longer puts book in mouth right away
- Turns board book pages

**Communication and Cognition**
What your child is saying and learning
- Says single words, then 2- to 4-word phrases
- Gives book to adult to read
- Points at pictures
- Turns book right-side up
- Names pictures, follows simple stories

**Anticipatory Guidance**
What parents can do
- Ask “Where’s the dog?” or “What is that?”
- Be willing to read the same book again and again
- As you read, talk about the pictures
- Keep using books in daily routines

**What to Read**
- Board books; rhyming books
- Picture books; books that name things

### 2 TO 3 YEARS

**Motor Development**
What your child is doing
- Learns to turn paper pages, 2 to 3 pages at a time
- Starts to scribble

**Communication and Cognition**
What your child is saying and learning
- Adds 2-4 new words per day
- Names familiar objects
- Likes the same book again and again
- Completes sentences and rhymes in familiar stories

**Anticipatory Guidance**
What parents can do
- Ask “What happens next?” in familiar stories
- Point out letters, numbers
- Point out words and pictures that begin with the same sound
- Together, make up stories about the pictures

**What to Read**
- Rhyming books; picture books that tell stories; search and find books

### 3 TO 4 YEARS

**Motor Development**
What your child is doing
- Turns pages one at a time, and from left to right
- Sits still for longer stories
- Scribbles and draws

**Communication and Cognition**
What your child is saying and learning
- Recites whole phrases from books
- Moves toward letter recognition
- Begins to detect rhyme
- Pretends to read to dolls and stuffed animals

**Anticipatory Guidance**
What parents can do
- Ask your child to tell the story
- Encourage writing, drawing
- Point out the letters in your child’s name

**What to Read**
- Picture books that tell longer stories; counting and alphabet books

### 4 TO 5 YEARS

**Motor Development**
What your child is doing
- Starts to copy letters and numbers
- Sits still for even longer stories

**Communication and Cognition**
What your child is saying and learning
- Can listen longer
- Recognizes numbers, letters
- Can retell familiar stories
- Can make rhymes
- Learning letter names and sounds

**Anticipatory Guidance**
What parents can do
- Relate the story to your child’s own experiences
- Let your child see you read
- Ask your child to tell the story
- Encourage writing, drawing
- Point out the letters in your child’s name

**What to Read**
- Fairy tales and legends; books with longer stories, fewer pictures

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