

Learning new language skills is a hallmark of kindergarten. Your child will learn about the alphabet and its role in reading. Your child will practice rhyming, matching words with beginning sounds, and blending sounds into words. Practice with these types of activities is a powerful step toward learning to read and spell correctly. The size of your child's vocabulary is another key factor in his or her ability to read and comprehend books and stories. Your child also will begin to experiment with writing and will be encouraged to use a combination of drawing, dictating, and writing letters to share information, ideas, and feelings.

Skills Your Child Will Be Working On

- Naming upper and lower-case letters, matching those letters with their sounds, and printing them
- Comparing the adventures and experiences of characters in familiar stories, such as fairy tales and folktales
- Retelling familiar stories and talking about stories read to them using details from the text.
- Using a combination of drawing, dictating, and writing to describe an event, including his or her reaction to what happened
- Stating an opinion or preference about a topic or book in writing (e.g., "My Favorite book is _____ because?")
- Taking part in classroom conversation and following rulers for discussions (e.g. learning to listen to others and taking turns when speaking)
- Speaking clearly to express thoughts, feelings, and ideas, including descriptions of familiar people, places things, and events.
- Asking and answering questions about key details in stories or other information read aloud
- Understanding and using question words (e.g., who, what, where, when, why, how) in discussions
- Learning to recognize, spell, and properly use those little grammatical words that hold the language together (e.g., a, the, to, of, from, I, is, are)

Learning Activity to Use at Home

READING ACTIVITY

Take every opportunity you can to play with upper and lower case letters with your child. Take the time to play with your child with magnetic letters, letter tiles or even simple letters that you write on small squares of paper or cardboard. Ask your child to tell you the name of each letter and if possible one sound of this letter. For example, you could remind your child that the letter "a" can sound like the short a sound in the word "apple." When buying gifts, look for simple electronic toys that connect letter sounds and letter symbols.

WRITING ACTIVITY

A fun way to help your child to reflect on ANY 'fun' family activity, such as going to the zoo, attending a birthday party, going to the beach, playing at a park, or even simply going on a neighborhood walk, is to have your child draw a picture about a "special family activity." This is best to do right after the family activity. Have your child use crayons (or pencil, etc.), to draw a picture about the family activity. Ask questions, such as, "Tell me what we did today? Draw a picture about what happened. What did you like best? Why?" As the child draws the picture, ask them to 'add detail' where possible (clothing, background details, etc.). Once the picture has been drawn, ask your child "tell me what is happening in your picture" and "how did this fun family activity make you feel?" As they explain the picture, write down what they say at the bottom of the picture (or on a separate paper and attach it to the bottom when finished." Remember to post it up somewhere in your home.

Teacher and Parent Conferencing - Topics for ongoing conversations throughout the school year with your child's teacher

The focus in these early years should be in the development of good reading habits. When you talk to the teacher, do not worry about covering everything. Instead, keep the conversation focused on the most important topics. In kindergarten, these include:

- Is your child using vocabulary learned through words and phrases acquired through conversations, readings, and being read to.
- Does your child use knowledge of letters and letter-sound to form basic words that are age and grade appropriate.
- Does your child speak audibly and expresses thoughts, feelings and ideas clearly.

Ask to see a sample of your child's work. Ask the teacher questions such as: Is this piece of work satisfactory? How could it be better? Is my child on track? How can I help my child improve or excel in this area? If my child needs extra support or wants to learn more about a subject, are there resources to help his or her learning outside the classroom?