

Developing and Using Book Knowledge and Print Concepts



Children develop and use book knowledge and print concepts when adults encourage and support them to participate in print-rich environments that feature many forms of print and when adults engage them to interact with the environment individually and with other children.

Children show developing interest in print-rich environments when they—	Toddlers first begin to participate in print-rich environments when they—	Preschoolers expand their knowledge and skills when they—
<p>See and use environmental print, such as labels and signs, even before they can read them</p>	<p>Notice, point out, talk about, and use</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exit, stop, bathroom, and store signs; restaurant logos, children’s names, and key words in books • Three-dimensional letters and numbers • Alphabet and number charts, classroom rules, chants, and songs • Pocket charts with pictures showing activities, class schedule, etc. • Labels with and without pictures for classroom objects, cubbies, hooks, etc. 	
<p>Notice and later talk about print and its features</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Notice print as a meaningful part of a book • Point out letter shapes as special • Begin to name some letters—especially those in their name • Use books appropriately, by holding a book upright and turning its pages 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss the shapes and features of letters and print • Identify and name letters and their sounds • Notice and talk about words, the fact that words are made up of letters, and that there are spaces before and after words
<p>Actively participate in interactive reading experiences</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore books by mouthing, touching, and carrying them • Turn pages in books • Point at and name objects and pictures in books, and repeat words read to them 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask and answer simple questions about books, such as “how” and “why”

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<p>Participate when stories are read to them</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Show active interest when adults read simple stories and respond to an adult’s efforts to engage the children in conversations about the stories • Choose books they are interested in 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Begin to discuss simple story elements, such as the characters and their feelings • Begin to summarize important events when retelling a story
<p>Participate in reading sessions in which books teach them information about the world</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listen to simple books about objects, routines, babies, animals, and other things that interest them • Choose books themselves to explore and to have someone read to them 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Begin to use informational books to answer questions about the world • Begin to summarize information in books
<p>Choose and use books independently</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have favorite books • Ask to have books reread 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have favorite books • Ask to have books reread • Seek out new books on their own
<p>Pretend to read either silently or aloud (emergent reading)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Turn pages 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remember, retell, or make up stories associated with a book
<p>Begin to write, starting with intentional scribbles and moving toward writing conventional words, including the child’s own name (emergent writing)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scribble • Makes lines, curves and circles when “writing” • Forms some of the letters of their name 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make letters that start to look conventional • Identify marks they make as they “write” • Make marks or letters associated with their name

How adults use books to promote children's book knowledge

Adults promote children's book knowledge when they—

► Share books

Very young children explore books with adults. The child sets the pace, showing interest through gaze and attention. The text on the page is rarely the focus of attention as the adult talks about the features of the pictures that interest the child.

► Read books to children

Adults frequently read books aloud to children. The children's books are colorful, fun, and engaging, and adults and children enjoy reading them together. Adults typically read to infants and toddlers during lap-time to support warm, engaging interactions between the adult and one or two children. Adults read to preschoolers one-on-one, in pairs, or in small groups in order to allow for more interaction between adults and children during the reading. Sometimes adults read to preschoolers in larger groups if the book is short and the topic is very interesting to the children.

► Engage children in interactive read alouds

In this way of reading books to children, adults involve children directly in reading the book. Adults may prompt children to ask or answer questions (as they are able) about what they read, define new words, or explain new ideas for the children and provide other supports. Adults engaged in an interactive read-aloud welcome and invite children's responses to the book. As with other ways of reading books to young children, most interactive reading sessions are short and involve an adult and one or two children.

► Use dialogic reading strategies

Dialogic reading is a specific way for adults to support a child in reading and interacting with a book. Dialogic reading methods encourage children to talk about the book and then talk some more about the book. Most methods involve

- prompting the child to say something about the book, perhaps by asking a question,
- waiting for the child to respond,
- responding by extending what the child says, and even
- repeating what the child says.

The CAR method and the PEER method are two dialogic strategies. The **CAR method** (Comment, Ask, Respond) is used with toddlers and preschoolers (Washington Learning Systems, n.d.). The **PEER method** (Prompt, Evaluate, Extend, Repeat) is another method that is often used with preschoolers (Whitehurst, n.d.).

► Engage children in shared reading

Toddlers and preschoolers "read along" with adults. A child will see the print and watch as an adult tracks the text by pointing to words with a finger or pointer while reading. Young children will also point to words as they "read." They aren't actually reading the book, but they may be reciting it from memory or watching how the words on the page relate to the words the adult is reading. Books, songs, chants, and poems are often read this way. In some preschool classrooms, teachers use very large books or chart paper, so groups of children can see the print.



Adults keep children engaged by using their knowledge of the book and the children

Young children benefit most when they are part of the action. Adults need to follow the children's lead and interact in a way that keeps them interested.

- ▶ Young children are more apt to engage with a book when adults:
 - Use a special voice or vary their tone when reading
 - Point out pictures that interest children
 - Focus on a single page or a few pages
 - Are aware when children are losing interest, skipping words or sections as needed in order to keep children engaged
- ▶ When infants and toddlers are engaged they will look at the book, touch it, look at the adult, or switch their gaze from the adult to the book. They will seem content and interested.
- ▶ Children signal when they are ready to stop reading by looking at something else, squirming and fussing, or turning the pages to get to the end.
- ▶ When it is time to end the book-reading activity, adults will want to turn the page, put the book down, and tickle, cuddle, or let the children crawl, walk, and play!



Children need to experience different types of books

Children should experience many types of children’s books. It is important to share books of all kinds—those with stories, information, and poetry and those that teach children specific ideas and concepts. It is also essential to select the kinds of books that are best for children’s age and interests.



- ▶ Different types of books can provide interactions for all ages—infants, toddlers, and preschoolers.
 - **Cloth books** are made of fabric and can include squeakers, crinkle sounds, and tactile objects. They can be easily grabbed by infants learning to reach and hold.
 - **Board books** are sturdy cardboard or plastic books designed for infants and toddlers to mouth and explore. They may be on any topic and can be used with all ages.
 - **Picture books** usually include engaging illustrations and may contain simple or complex stories or information. Picture books may be hardcover or paperback and may be on any topic. They, too, can be used with all ages.
- ▶ The content of books varies widely, giving adults the opportunity to share a range of topics with young children.
 - **Storybooks** are fictional (pretend) stories, typically about specific characters, their challenges, and the solutions to their problems.
 - **Informational texts** are nonfiction books that provide information about a topic and often use photographs.
 - **Poetry and songbooks** are books that often have pictures to illustrate poems, rhymes, or songs. Adults can sing or rhythmically chant as they read these books.
 - **Concept books** focus on a single concept, such as numbers or simple ideas.
 - **Mixed books** are books that fit into more than one category. Examples might be a storybook about the beach that provides information about shells and sea life, or a poetry book about a historical person.

What book knowledge and print concepts looks like

Juanita

<p>What experiences with book knowledge and print concepts look like for 10-month-old Juanita</p>	<p>Juanita cuddles on her father’s lap as her father pages through the <i>Buenas Noches, Luna</i> board book with her. He talks about the pictures on the pages, and she reaches out to the book, bringing it to her mouth.</p>
<p>What Juanita learns from these experiences</p>	<p>Juanita connects books with the warm feeling of cuddling with her father. She is developing an understanding that when the page is turned she hears new and different words—some for the first time!</p>
<p>How Early Head Start/ Head Start (EHS/HS) staff expand Juanita’s learning</p>	<p>When Juanita sees the board books at EHS she is comforted by these familiar objects. Her teacher also turns the pages and cuddles with Juanita and other children as she reads <i>Goodnight Moon</i>.</p>



Min

<p>What experiences with book knowledge and print concepts look like for Min who is 2 years, 9 months old</p>	<p>Min is crossing the street with his mother and grandmother when he comes to a complete stop. His alarmed mother looks up and sees that the green traffic light has changed to flashing red. She reassures Min that there is still time to cross the street.</p>
<p>What Min learns from these experiences</p>	<p>Min has realized that when the light is red, he should not go. He is also learning that the color of the light is symbolic—it represents something else, in this case, a command to stop.</p>
<p>How EHS/HS staff expand Min’s learning</p>	<p>Min’s mother tells their home visitor about the experience. The home visitor notes that one of Min’s favorite books is <i>I Read Signs</i>. They look through the book and identify different signs that tell you to stop. Min starts to point and shouts “Stop” whenever he sees a stop sign! He is identifying many different symbols that indicate “stop.” Later, this knowledge will help him understand that letters and words have meaning—just as stop signs do.</p>



Ari and Jean

<p>What experiences with book knowledge and print concepts look like for 4-year-olds Ari and Jean</p>	<p>Ari and Jean use environmental print to help them find things in their classroom. The labels throughout the room include both a picture and a written word or words. At the art center, Jean opens a box with the word “markers.” Ari notices that his name is under the Art Center symbol on the pocket chart, and he knows where he should go for art time.</p>
<p>What Ari and Jean learn from these experiences</p>	<p>Ari and Jean are developing their knowledge about print, even though they are not reading words.</p>
<p>How EHS/HS staff expand Ari’s and Jean’s learning</p>	<p>Ari’s and Jean’s teacher uses the labels to help the children understand print. She encourages them to identify the letters in the labels. Ari and Jean are excited that A is in their names, in “art,” and in “markers”!</p>



Alex

<p>What experiences with book knowledge and print concepts look like for 5-year-old Alex</p>	<p>Five-year-old Alex goes to the classroom library to find his favorite dinosaur book. He pages through it, “reading” the book by describing the pictures and remembering what he has heard on previous readings. His finger tracks the words from left to right on the page. He stops and examines some favorite pages carefully before returning it to the bin and walking away.</p>
<p>What Alex learns from these experiences</p>	<p>Alex is showing that he has learned a great deal about books and how they work! He can choose a book, hold it appropriately, turn the pages, track print, and use the pictures as prompts for “reading.”</p>
<p>How EHS/HS staff expand Alex’s learning</p>	<p>Alex has some trouble saying the dinosaurs’ names. His teacher has been helping him understand what a word is. He notices that some dinosaurs have one-word names (e.g., Stegosaurus), and others have two-word names (e.g., Tyrannosaurus Rex).</p>



Book Knowledge and Print Concepts supports School Readiness

Five-year-old José is ready for kindergarten. He has developed book knowledge by participating in many interactive book readings at home and at school!

What can 5-year-old José do?

- ▶ José can explain how books work! He is able to:
 - Hold a book written in Spanish with the binding on the left, ready to open and read
 - Explain that a title is the name of a book and the author is the person who wrote the book
 - Explain that the illustrator is the person who made the pictures in the book
 - Open a book and point to the words where his teacher should begin reading
 - Explain the difference between words and pictures
 - Point to the words as the teacher reads, moving his finger from left to right (since Spanish is read from left to right)
- ▶ José can talk to his family or his teachers about the books he hears! He is able to:
 - Retell a story he has heard and include the most important characters and events in his retelling
 - Tell something he has learned after hearing an informational book that interests him
 - Ask questions about what happens in a book, including “why” and “how” questions
 - Make predictions partway through a book about what he thinks will happen next
 - Connect his own experiences to events and characters in books
- ▶ José can use print outside of books, too! He is able to:
 - Find exits and bathrooms at school, in the library, and even in the store because he recognizes the exit sign and the bathroom symbols
 - Use the pedestrian stoplights to cross the street safely, knowing that green means go and red means stop
 - Recognize his favorite brands of cereal and crackers by their logos
 - Use labels to find classroom materials, such as markers, paper, and pencils
- ▶ José has developed an interest in and excitement about books! He is able to:
 - Talk about his favorite books and what is so wonderful about them
 - Be enthusiastic about books and confident that there are books that will interest him
 - Expect some books (informational texts) to provide information about the world



Families, book knowledge, and print concepts

- ▶ Different families use books and print differently with their children. Talk with families about how they use print and in which languages. They may read:
 - Books and magazines (children’s or adult’s)
 - Letters, postcards, or greeting cards
 - The Bible, the Koran, or other religious texts
 - Devotionals (including books of prayer, etc.)
 - Emails, websites, social media
 - Want ads
 - Recipes and shopping lists
 - Pamphlets, sales fliers, or coupons
- ▶ Once teachers are aware of the ways in which families support children’s interactions with print, they can begin to include familiar print materials in the classroom or family day care. Home visitors can offer support for existing print activities while giving ideas for new ways to use print in the home and community.
- ▶ Teachers and caregivers can ask families to share their old magazines or other materials and include these familiar written materials in the classroom. For example:
 - Recipes, sales fliers, coupons, and clean empty food containers in the dramatic play kitchen area
 - Books and magazines in the children’s home languages in the classroom library
 - Greeting cards and pamphlets at the writing center
 - Writing materials to support children to create familiar materials, such as lists



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