



# Digital Tools Designed for Parents: A Guide for Engaging Parents in Children’s Early Language and Literacy Development

This guide was created for early childhood professionals to explore digital tools that are designed to encourage parents to talk with their infants and children. Professionals can then share with parents these tools along with tips and information about talking with their young children. These early conversations build the foundational skills for children’s later language, social-emotional, and cognitive skills.

*The information in this guide should not be considered an endorsement of any particular tool or the use of such tools in general.*

## Digital Tool Review

Technology is everywhere, and parents can use mobile technology to find tools and information about child development. The digital tools featured in this guide promote face-to-face interactions between families and their children.\* Each of these tools offers parents and caregivers tips or activities that support children’s language and literacy development.

The goal of this review was to gather information about digital tools that:

- Are designed for families with young children, from prenatal to 8 years of age
- Offer parents ideas about how to engage with their child to support early language and literacy development
- Deliver demonstrations and tips directly to parents and caregivers
- Offer free content to family members who have mobile technology. Families may need to pay for Internet data or text messaging. Some tools charge for the full use of all features or information.

\*The search for digital tools for this guide involved surveying the Internet and colleagues in the United States to find helpful tools that were available in 2017 (January–April).

**Family engagement** is an interactive process through which early childhood education providers and professionals, family members, and their children build positive and goal-oriented relationships.

Building these relationships is a shared responsibility of families and professionals that requires mutual respect for the roles and strengths each has to offer. Family engagement means doing with—not doing to or for—families.

Parents’ engagement with their children during daily activities creates opportunities for learning. Positive examples of and prompts for this engagement can increase how often parents talk and play with their children.<sup>1–3</sup>

This guide defines “digital tools” as services or apps for mobile technology (phones, smartphones, or tablets). The search for these tools delivered numerous text messaging tools and apps for mobile devices that prompt parents to interact with their children. All tools included in this guide were designed for parents to use and then put away before interacting with their children. Some tools provide general prompts to support language and literacy development. Others deliver content matched to the child’s age or skills. Still others focus on a specific group, such as military families. While some of these digital tools reach several thousand people, others have a few hundred thousand users.

There are common patterns across tools. Many provide information intended for parents facing adversity. In interviews with digital tool developers, many developers emphasized the importance of “meeting parents where they are.” Developers spoke about the power of technology to reach busy parents and to empower them as their children’s first and best teachers. The content of the tools often focuses on enhancing everyday interactions and building parent-child relationships. Detailed information about the identified tools is included in the following tables.

### Strategies Used to Search for Digital Tools for Parent Engagement:

- Internet search engines
- Internet repositories, including *New America’s Atlas: Integrating Technology in Early Literacy and Bridging the Word Gap Challenge*
- Recommendations from colleagues in the digital media field

## Considerations When Choosing a Tool

Digital tools have the potential to reach many families at a low cost. Some tools offer a promising way to encourage parents to engage with their children as they develop language and literacy skills. Yet the landscape of digital tools is wide and ever changing. To date, there have been no independent studies on the effectiveness of the listed tools. In addition, research rarely keeps up with the rapid development of new tools. Here are several things to think about when choosing a tool:

- **Identify Hidden Costs.** Many people own the technology for digital tools. Yet many phone plans and pre-paid phones charge extra for text messages. Internet data is often needed initially to download the app and to receive daily activity suggestions. For some, access to this data may represent a hidden expense.
- **Check Literacy Levels.** Much of the content in text messaging tools and apps is text based. Yet some users may want a tool that has photos, audio, or videos to support different literacy levels.
- **Review User Friendliness.** Digital tools differ in their user friendliness. Everyone has a different level of confidence with technology. Family members may want assistance with digital tools. Text tools can be easier to operate, and this consideration may inform the choice of digital tool.
- **Look for Two-Way Interaction.** All tools listed in this guide promote two-way parent-child interactions. Some tools also invite two-way communication between the tool and the parent. For example, some tools ask parents to provide feedback and suggest activities.
- **Customize to Children’s Ability.** Many of the tools match activities to a child’s age. Some tools adjust to parent feedback on how well the activity matches a child’s ability. These types of customizations may be helpful. Consider whether tools tailor tips to developmental level.

- **Consider Language and Culture.** Some tools offer content in multiple languages, but many do not. Consider the language needs of the community when selecting a tool. Also check whether images, language translations, and activities are responsive to cultural values and support home language use.
- **Balance the Tool with the Interaction.** The tools in this resource are designed for parent use.\* When parents use a digital tool, they may accidentally draw their children to it. The tool may also disrupt important interactions between the parent and child. Find a tool that does not get in the way of important parent-child interactions.<sup>4-5</sup>

\* We excluded tools designed for children. For those interested in technology made for children, several reviews provide selection guidelines.<sup>6-7</sup> We do not endorse specific tools or the use of tools in general.

These considerations are a starting point for providers and families. Individuals and groups can try tools and look for ones that fit their interests and values. Parents can also see which tools are enjoyable and helpful. Tools should support parents' time with their children. Parents, not the technology, are children's first and most important teachers.

## Providers' Guide to Digital Tools to Support Children's Learning

Explore the *Providers' Guide to Digital Tools to Support Children's Learning* that begins on page 8 for information about digital tools designed for parents. Early childhood professionals can use this table to find family engagement activities for families. The information in the table comes from interviews with developers and public sources, and includes basic information and the website for accessing each tool. The table also includes specific information, such as any cost for using the tool and the target ages for the tool's information and strategies.

## Parents' Guide to Digital Tools to Support Children's Learning

You may share a shorter version of this guide, the *Parents' Guide to Digital Tools to Support Children's Learning* (which begins on page 12), with parents and families who are interested in selecting and using a digital tool to promote children's learning and literacy development. The *Parents' Guide* is a shorter version of this *Providers' Guide*. While both guides can be shared with parents, the shorter version is for parents who may not have time to read through the *Providers' Guide*, or who may prefer to focus on the highlighted details from the *Providers' Guide*. When sharing the *Parent's Guide*, providers should be sure to emphasize the following key features:

- The table includes basic information and the website for accessing each tool. It also includes specific information, such as any cost for using the tool and the target ages for the tool's information.
- Each tool in this resource offers hints and ideas to help parents support their child's language and literacy development.
- The tools were designed for parents to use and then put away before interacting with their children. Children are not the intended users of the tools.

## Organization of Table

The table is organized into four sections: Digital Tool, Basic Information, Cost Factors, and Content Delivery. Each of these sections is described below. Some information in the table is presented using icons to give users quick and accessible information. These icons are described on page 5.

## Digital Tool

### Tool Name, Description, and Location/Source

Provides the name of the tool, a brief description of the tool, and where to download the tool. The description includes the type of digital tool, which is important to know, since mobile apps run on smartphones or tablets, and text services require a phone with text messaging.

## Basic Information

### Ages of Children

Describes for which age the information offered by the tool is most appropriate.

Ages	Description
<b>P to 1</b>	Prenatal to 1 year old
<b>P to 2</b>	Prenatal to 2 years old
<b>P to 5</b>	Prenatal to 5 years old
<b>0 to 3</b>	Newborn to 3 years old
<b>0 to 5</b>	Newborn to 5 years old
<b>0 to 6</b>	Newborn to 6 years old
<b>0 to 8</b>	Newborn to 8 years old

### English Reading Level

Describes the main language, reading level, and other languages in which the information is available to the user. For text in English, the tool delivers text at the listed grade level (as tested with the Flesch-Kincaid algorithm). Reading levels were calculated by using text samples from each tool. The reading levels are for grade levels for U.S. schools.

## Cost Factors

### Cost After Free Sign-up or Download

Describes the cost of using the tool after free sign-up or download. The tool must be free for sign-up or download to be included in the table. Some tools have optional fees to access all content. The fee or cost may be paid by a family, agency, group, or school (such as when school districts pay for all community members to use all the information in a tool).

## Daily Data Usage

Describes data requirements to use the tool.

Symbol	Description
✓	The check mark means that the tool requires an Internet connection (via cellular data or Wi-Fi) to get new tips or activities.
📞	The phone icon means that users may need to pay for text messages.
🚫	The “none” icon means that the tool can be used without an Internet connection (except for general updates after downloading an app or starting to use a text service).

## Content Delivery

### Areas of Customized Content

Describes the ability of the tool to be customized based on user preferences. Family members (or groups working with families) can tailor some of the digital tools to their preferences.

Areas	Description
<b>Age groups</b>	Tool offers broad age categories.
<b>Age match</b>	Tool matches tips to a child’s date of birth automatically.
<b>Agency add-ons</b>	Tool works with an agency to add specific activities, functions, tips, or topics.
<b>Choice of topics</b>	Tool offers different topics within a library or catalog.
<b>Log</b>	Tool lets users save activities after finishing and/or liking them.
<b>Notification</b>	Tool gives users a choice of when to receive information.
<b>Photos</b>	Tool lets users add photos of a child or an activity.
<b>Skill level</b>	Tool prompts parents to review their child’s specific skill level.

## Content Advisors

Describes who or what advised the development of content that is delivered to users. Developers consulted a variety of people and sources to get ideas for tips and activities.

Advisors	Description
Clinicians	Medical or mental health professionals
Educators	Teachers and other education professionals
Experts	People with established knowledge about child development
Learning Standards	State or organization standards
Parents	Input from focus groups, survey responses, or advisory board members
Research Findings	Studies of education or child development

## Materials Needed for Activities

Describes the four types of materials needed for activities.

Type of Material	Description
None	No materials are needed
Craft Materials	Materials such as glue, paper, tape
Household Items	Materials such as food, clothing, books, or other objects typically used by family members
Toys	Materials such as purchased dolls or puzzles, sometimes with a specific make or model

## Delivery of Information

Describes the two main ways that tools deliver information.

Delivery Method	Description
Pulled by parent	Parents (or other users) choose information by opening an app and/or clicking on an activity.
Pushed by Tool	The tool sends information, such as via text or an app notification.

## Duration of Information Cycle

Describes the length of time during which the information will be delivered to the user. The word “cycle” is used to describe how long new information is delivered. For example, a “three-year” cycle has new tips across three years.

## Presentation Mode

Describes the ways that tools present information, including the format and style.

Presentation		Format	Style	
<b>Model</b>	The tool shows examples or activities.	<b>Audio</b>	<b>Descriptions</b>	Written information about an activity
<b>Prompt</b>	The tool sends tips or reminders to try an activity.	<b>Pictures</b>	<b>Examples</b>	People acting out examples of an activity
		<b>Text</b>	<b>Instructions</b>	Steps listed for an activity
		<b>Video</b>	<b>Tips</b>	Text with usually fewer than 140 characters

## Sharing of Information

Describes the communication method used by the tool and the user.

Method	Description
<b>One Way</b>	The tool sends information to users.
<b>User Feedback</b>	The tool asks for feedback from users.
<b>Two Way</b>	The user and the tool communicate or exchange information.

# Providers' Guide to Digital Tools to Support Children's Learning

Explore the *Providers' Guide to Digital Tools to Support Children's Learning* for information about digital tools designed for parents. Early childhood professionals can use this table to find family engagement activities for families.

*The information in this guide should not be considered an endorsement of any particular tool or the use of such tools in general.*

Digital Tool	Basic Information		Cost Factors		Content Delivery						
Tool name, description, location/source	Ages of children (years old)	Language, reading level, other languages	Cost after free sign-up or download	Daily data usage	Areas of customized content	Content advisors	Duration of information cycle	Materials needed for activities	Delivery of information	Presentation mode	Sharing of information
<b>Aimee's Babies Word Gap App</b> A mobile app to provide tips to raise awareness of the importance of early language and literacy <a href="http://thewordgapapp.com">thewordgapapp.com</a>	P to 5	English (5.8 level) Spanish	Free	⊘	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Age groups</li> <li>Choice of topics</li> <li>Log</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clinician</li> <li>Parents</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parent choice</li> <li>200 activities, plus songs and nursery rhymes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>None usually needed</li> <li>Some household items</li> </ul>	Pulled by parent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Model</li> <li>Text descriptions</li> <li>Video examples</li> </ul>	One way
<b>Babies on the Homefront</b> A mobile app with activities to support connections and conversations between children and their parents currently or formerly in the military <a href="http://babiesonthehomefront.org">babiesonthehomefront.org</a>	0 to 5	English (6.7 level) Spanish*	Free	⊘	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Age groups</li> <li>Choice of topics</li> <li>Photos</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clinicians</li> <li>Experts</li> <li>Parents</li> <li>Research findings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parent choice</li> <li>More than 75 activities</li> <li>Links to more than 15 videos</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Craft materials</li> <li>Household items</li> </ul>	Pulled by parent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Model</li> <li>Text descriptions</li> </ul>	One way
<b>Baby Sparks</b> A mobile app to give parents daily activities that adjust to a child's language and other developmental levels <a href="http://babysparks.com">babysparks.com</a>	0 to 2	English (6.5 level) Spanish	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>For free: Basic content</li> <li>For cost: Family or agency pays to get all content</li> </ul>	✓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>For free: Age match, log, skill level</li> <li>For cost: Agency add-ons, choice of topics</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clinicians</li> <li>Parents</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Two-year cycle</li> <li>For free: limited number</li> <li>For cost: more than 700 activities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Household items</li> <li>Toys</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pulled by parent</li> <li>Free: 2 per day</li> <li>For cost: All content</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Model</li> <li>Text instructions</li> <li>Video instructions</li> </ul>	Two way: Parent rates skills of child; the app adjusts to skills of child and gives feedback
<b>Beginning with Babble</b> A mobile app to deliver short tips for language-rich interactions for families and their children <a href="http://leapempowers.org/beginning-with-babble">leapempowers.org/beginning-with-babble</a>	0 to 5	English (6.7 level) Spanish*	Free	⊘	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Age groups</li> <li>Choice of topics</li> <li>Photos</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clinicians</li> <li>Experts</li> <li>Parents</li> <li>Research findings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parent choice</li> <li>More than 75 activities</li> <li>Links to more than 15 videos</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Craft materials</li> <li>Household items</li> </ul>	Pulled by parent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Model</li> <li>Text descriptions</li> </ul>	One way

Key to symbols used under "Daily data usage": ✓=Need Internet; ⊕=May Cost for Text Message; ⊘=No Internet Needed

\* Spanish version: Download a separate app called "Los Bebés de Familias Militares y Veteranas"

## Providers' Guide to Digital Tools to Support Children's Learning, cont.

Digital Tool	Basic Information		Cost Factors		Content Delivery						
Tool name, description, location/source	Ages of children (years old)	Language, reading level, other languages	Cost after free sign-up or download	Daily data usage	Areas of customized content	Content advisors	Duration of information cycle	Materials needed for activities	Delivery of information	Presentation mode	Sharing of information
<b>Bright by Three</b> A text service to deliver tips and information to help with children's language and development <a href="http://brightbythree.org/bright-by-text/">brightbythree.org/bright-by-text/</a>	0 to 3	English (3.3 level) Spanish	Free	☎ ✓ (for links)	Age match	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Educators</li> <li>• Experts</li> <li>• Parents</li> <li>• Research findings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Three-year cycle</li> <li>• More than 250 tips</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• None usually needed</li> <li>• Some household items</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pushed by tool</li> <li>• 1 to 5 per week</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prompt</li> <li>• Text tips</li> <li>• Links to text and video instructions</li> </ul>	User feedback: User rates helpfulness of links
<b>Daily Vroom</b> A mobile app with suggestions for everyday activities to help language and brain development <a href="http://joinvroom.org/">joinvroom.org/</a>	0 to 5	English (5.2 level) Spanish	Free	✓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Age match</li> <li>• Choice of topics</li> <li>• Log</li> <li>• Notification</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Experts</li> <li>• Parents</li> <li>• Research findings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Three-year cycle</li> <li>• More than 1000 activities</li> </ul>	Household items, if any needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pulled by parent</li> <li>• 1 per day</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prompt</li> <li>• Text descriptions</li> </ul>	User feedback: User can share own activity ideas with tool
<b>Flit, A Family Literacy App</b> A mobile app with activities to use at home to support early language and literacy <a href="http://famlit.ca">famlit.ca</a>	0 to 6	English (5.6 level)	Free	⊘	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Age groups</li> <li>• Choice of topics</li> <li>• Log</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clinicians</li> <li>• Educators</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parent choice</li> <li>• More than 100 activities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Craft materials</li> <li>• Household items</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pulled by parent</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Model</li> <li>• Text instructions</li> <li>• Pictures</li> </ul>	One way
<b>Kinedu</b> A mobile app that demonstrates ways to learn through play; for language and other areas of development <a href="http://kinedu.com">kinedu.com</a>	P to 2	English (7.9 level) Spanish	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For free: basic content</li> <li>• For cost: family or agency pays to get all content</li> </ul>	✓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Age groups</li> <li>• Log</li> <li>• Notification</li> <li>• Skill level</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Educators</li> <li>• Experts</li> <li>• Learning standards</li> <li>• Parents</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Two-year cycle</li> <li>• For free: Limited number of activities</li> <li>• For cost: More than 1000 activities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Household items</li> <li>• Toys</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pulled by parent</li> <li>• For free: 1 per day</li> <li>• For cost: All content</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Model</li> <li>• Text</li> <li>• Video instructions</li> </ul>	Two way: Parent rates skills of child. App adjusts to skills of child and gives feedback

Key to symbols used under "Daily data usage": ✓=Need Internet; ☎=May Cost for Text Message; ⊘=No Internet Needed

## Providers' Guide to Digital Tools to Support Children's Learning, cont.

Digital Tool	Basic Information		Cost Factors		Content Delivery						
Tool name, description, location/source	Ages of children (years old)	Language, reading level, other languages	Cost after free sign-up or download	Daily data usage	Areas of customized content	Content advisors	Duration of information cycle	Materials needed for activities	Delivery of information	Presentation mode	Sharing of information
<b>Let's Play!</b> A mobile app with activities that fit into daily routines and outings <a href="https://zerotothree.org/resources/380-let-s-play-free-parenting-app">zerotothree.org/resources/380-let-s-play-free-parenting-app</a>	0 to 5	English (7.4 level)	Free	⊘	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Age groups</li> <li>Choice of topics</li> <li>Photos</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Experts</li> <li>Parents</li> <li>Research findings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parent choice</li> <li>130 activities</li> </ul>	Household items	Pulled by parent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Model</li> <li>Text instructions</li> <li>Pictures</li> </ul>	One way
<b>Ready Rosie</b> A mobile app with videos to model activities for literacy and math, while playing and talking with child <a href="https://readyrosie.com">readyrosie.com</a>	0 to 8	English (5.4 level) Spanish Subtitles for Arabic and Vietnamese	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>For free: Limited content</li> <li>For cost: School or agency pays to get all content</li> </ul>	✓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>For free: No customization</li> <li>For cost: Age groups, agency add-ons, choice of topics, log</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Educators</li> <li>Experts</li> <li>Learning standard,</li> <li>Parents</li> <li>Research findings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Free: Limited number</li> <li>For cost: Cycle for broad age groups</li> </ul>	Household items	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pulled by parent</li> <li>Free: Limited number</li> <li>For cost: 1 to 5 per week</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Model</li> <li>Text tip</li> <li>Video examples</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>User feedback</li> <li>For cost: Teacher-parent communication</li> </ul>
<b>READY4K!</b> A weekly text service with three tips on one topic each week to promote language, literacy, and other subjects <a href="https://ready4k.parentpowered.com">ready4k.parentpowered.com</a>	0 to 6	English (2.8 level) Arabic Somali Spanish	Free	Ⓜ	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>For free: Age groups</li> <li>For cost: Agency add-ons</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Educators</li> <li>Learning standards</li> <li>Research findings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Six-year cycle</li> <li>New content for each year of child's life</li> </ul>	Household items, if any needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pushed by tool</li> <li>3 per week</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prompt</li> <li>Text tips</li> </ul>	One way
<b>Talk. Read. Sing.</b> A mobile app that prompts interactions with children using activities that focus on language and brain development <a href="https://scholastic.com/first5CA">scholastic.com/first5CA</a>	0 to 5	English (5.5 level)	Free	✓	Notification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Experts</li> <li>Research findings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>One-year cycle</li> <li>365 activities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>None usually needed</li> <li>Some household items</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pushed by tool</li> <li>1 per day</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prompt</li> <li>Text tips</li> </ul>	One way

Key to symbols used under "Daily data usage": ✓=Need Internet; Ⓜ=May Cost for Text Message; ⊘=No Internet Needed

## Providers' Guide to Digital Tools to Support Children's Learning, cont.

Digital Tool	Basic Information		Cost Factors		Content Delivery						
	Tool name, description, location/source	Ages of children (years old)	Language, reading level, other languages	Cost after free sign-up or download	Daily data usage	Areas of customized content	Content advisors	Duration of information cycle	Materials needed for activities	Delivery of information	Presentation mode
<b>Text4Baby</b> A text service with tips to promote daily conversations as opportunities for language and brain development, along with health information <a href="http://text4baby.org">text4baby.org</a>	P to 1	English (4.3 level) Spanish	Free	☒ (carriers pay text costs)  ✓ (for links)	Age match	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Experts</li> <li>• Parents</li> <li>• Research findings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prenatal</li> <li>• 12-month cycle</li> </ul>	Household items	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pushed by tool</li> <li>• 3 per week</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prompt</li> <li>• Text tips or questions</li> <li>• Links to mixed media or text information</li> </ul>	Two way: Parent answers questions and receives replies
<b>Univision: "Pequeños y Valiosos"</b> A multimedia text service with tips for making activities part of the daily routine to improve language, literacy, and other early learning areas <a href="http://exito.univision.com">exito.univision.com</a>	0 to 5	Spanish	Free	☑	None	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Experts</li> <li>• Parents</li> <li>• Research findings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One-year cycle</li> <li>• New themes each year</li> </ul>	Household items	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pushed by tool</li> <li>• 2 per week</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prompt</li> <li>• Text tips</li> <li>• Picture or video examples</li> </ul>	One way
<b>WeeSchool</b> A mobile app with activities paired to monthly progress in developmental areas including language <a href="http://weeschool.com">weeschool.com</a>	0 to 3	English (8.6 level)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For free: Basic content</li> <li>• For cost: Family pays to get all content</li> </ul>	✓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For free: Age match, choice of topics, notifications</li> <li>• For cost: Log</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clinicians</li> <li>• Learning standards</li> <li>• Parents</li> <li>• Research findings</li> </ul>	Three-year cycle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Household items</li> <li>• Toys</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pulled by parent</li> <li>• For free: Up to 8 activities per month</li> <li>• For cost: Up to 10 "play plans" per month</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Model</li> <li>• Text</li> <li>• Video instructions</li> </ul>	One way

Key to symbols used under "Daily data usage": ✓=Need Internet; ☑=May Cost for Text Message; ☒=No Internet Needed

# Parents' Guide to Digital Tools to Support Children's Learning

Use this guide to learn about digital tools designed to help you support your children's learning about language and literacy.

Find basic information about each tool, including where to find it, the cost and useful hints and ideas. These tools are intended for adults to use before talking to children. The tools are not intended for children to use.

*The information in this guide should not be considered an endorsement of any particular tool or the use of such tools in general.*

Digital Tool	Basic Information	Cost Factors		Content Delivery			
Tool name, description, where to find tool	Ages of children (years old)	Cost after free sign-up or download	Daily data usage	Duration of information cycle	Materials needed for activities	Delivery of information	Presentation mode
<b>Aimee's Babies Word Gap App</b> A mobile app to provide tips to raise awareness of the importance of early language and literacy <a href="http://thewordgapapp.com">thewordgapapp.com</a>	P to 5	Free	⊘	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parent choice</li> <li>200 activities</li> <li>Songs and nursery rhymes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>None usually needed</li> <li>Some household items</li> </ul>	Pulled by parent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Model</li> <li>Text descriptions</li> <li>Video examples</li> </ul>
<b>Babies on the Homefront</b> A mobile app with activities to support connections and conversations between children and their parents currently or formerly in the military. <a href="http://babiesonthehomefront.org">babiesonthehomefront.org</a>	0 to 5	Free	⊘	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parent choice</li> <li>More than 75 activities</li> <li>Links to more than 15 videos</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Craft materials</li> <li>Household items</li> </ul>	Pulled by parent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Model</li> <li>Text descriptions</li> </ul>
<b>Baby Sparks</b> A mobile app to give parents daily activities that adjust to child's language and other developmental levels <a href="http://babysparks.com">babysparks.com</a>	0 to 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>For free: Basic content</li> <li>For cost: Family or agency pays to get all content</li> </ul>	✓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Two-year cycle</li> <li>For free: Limited number</li> <li>For cost: More than 700 activities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Household items</li> <li>Toys</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pulled by parent</li> <li>For free: 2 per day</li> <li>For cost: All content</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Model</li> <li>Text instructions</li> <li>Video instructions</li> </ul>
<b>Beginning with Babble</b> A mobile app to deliver short tips for language-rich interactions for families and their children <a href="http://leapempowers.org/beginning-with-babble">leapempowers.org/beginning-with-babble</a>	0 to 5	Free	⊘	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Five-year cycle</li> <li>More than 700 tips</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>None usually needed</li> <li>Some household items</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sent by tool</li> <li>Up to 10 per day</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prompt</li> <li>Text and audio tips</li> <li>Video examples</li> </ul>

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## Parents' Guide to Digital Tools to Support Children's Learning, cont.

Digital Tool	Basic Information	Cost Factors		Content Delivery			
		Tool name, description, where to find tool	Ages of children (years old)	Cost after free sign-up or download	Daily data usage	Duration of information cycle	Materials needed for activities
<p><b>Bright by Three</b> A text service to deliver tips and information to help with children's language and development <a href="http://brightbythree.org/bright-by-text/">brightbythree.org/bright-by-text/</a></p>	0 to 3	Free	☎ ✓ (for links)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Three-year cycle</li> <li>• More than 250 tips</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• None usually needed</li> <li>• Some household items</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sent by tool</li> <li>• 1 to 5 per week</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prompt</li> <li>• Text tips</li> <li>• Links to text and video instructions</li> </ul>
<p><b>Daily Vroom</b> A mobile app with suggestions for everyday activities to help language and brain development <a href="http://joinvroom.org/">joinvroom.org/</a></p>	0 to 5	Free	✓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Three-year cycle</li> <li>• More than 1000 activities</li> </ul>	Household items, if any needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Initiated by parent</li> <li>• 1 per day</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prompt</li> <li>• Text descriptions</li> </ul>
<p><b>Flit, A Family Literacy App</b> A mobile app with activities to use at home to support early language and literacy <a href="http://famlit.ca">famlit.ca</a></p>	0 to 6	Free	⊘	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parent choice</li> <li>• More than 100 activities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Craft materials</li> <li>• Household items</li> </ul>	Initiated by parent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Model</li> <li>• Text instructions</li> <li>• Pictures</li> </ul>
<p><b>Kinedu</b> A mobile app that demonstrates ways to learn through play; for language and other areas of development <a href="http://kinedu.com">kinedu.com</a></p>	P to 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For free: Basic content</li> <li>• For cost: Family or agency pays to get all content</li> </ul>	✓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Two-year cycle</li> <li>• For free: Limited number</li> <li>• For cost: More than 1000 activities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Household items</li> <li>• Toys</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Initiated by parent</li> <li>• For free: 1 per day</li> <li>• For cost: All content</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Model</li> <li>• Text</li> <li>• Video instructions</li> </ul>
<p><b>Let's Play!</b> A mobile app with activities that fit into daily routines and outings <a href="http://zerotothree.org/resources/380-let-s-play-free-parenting-app">zerotothree.org/resources/380-let-s-play-free-parenting-app</a></p>	0 to 5	Free	⊘	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parent choice</li> <li>• 130 activities</li> </ul>	Household items	Initiated by parent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Model</li> <li>• Text instructions</li> <li>• Pictures</li> </ul>
<p><b>Ready Rosie</b> A mobile app with videos to model activities for literacy and math, while playing and talking with child <a href="http://readyrosie.com">readyrosie.com</a></p>	0 to 8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For free: Limited content</li> <li>• For cost: School or agency pays to get all content</li> </ul>	✓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For free: Limited number</li> <li>• For cost: Cycles for broad age groups</li> </ul>	Household items	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Initiated by parent</li> <li>• For free: Limited number</li> <li>• For cost: 1 to 5 per week</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Model</li> <li>• Text tip</li> <li>• Video examples</li> </ul>

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## Parents' Guide to Digital Tools to Support Children's Learning, cont.

Digital Tool	Basic Information	Cost Factors		Content Delivery			
		Tool name, description, where to find tool	Ages of children (years old)	Cost after free sign-up or download	Daily data usage	Duration of information cycle	Materials needed for activities
<p><b>READY4K!</b> A weekly text service with three tips on one topic to promote language, literacy, and other subjects <a href="http://ready4k.parentpowered.com">ready4k.parentpowered.com</a></p>	0 to 6	Free	📶	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Six-year cycle</li> <li>• New content for each year of child's life</li> </ul>	Household items, if any needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sent by tool</li> <li>• 3 per week</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prompt</li> <li>• Text tips</li> </ul>
<p><b>Talk. Read. Sing.</b> A mobile app that prompts interactions with children using activities that focus on language and brain development <a href="http://scholastic.com/first5CA">scholastic.com/first5CA</a></p>	0 to 5	Free	✓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One-year cycle</li> <li>• 365 activities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• None usually needed</li> <li>• Some household items</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sent by tool</li> <li>• 1 per day</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prompt</li> <li>• Text tips</li> </ul>
<p><b>Text4Baby</b> A text service with tips to promote daily conversations as opportunities for language and brain development, along with health information <a href="http://text4baby.org">text4baby.org</a></p>	P to 1	Free	📶	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One-year cycle</li> <li>• New themes each year</li> </ul>	Household items	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sent by tool</li> <li>• 2 per week</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prompt</li> <li>• Text tips</li> <li>• Picture or video examples</li> </ul>
<p><b>Univision: "Pequeños y Valiosos"</b> A multimedia text service with tips for making activities part of the daily routine to improve language, literacy, and other early learning areas <a href="http://exitounivision.com">exitounivision.com</a></p>	0 to 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For free: Basic content</li> <li>• For cost: Family pays to get all content</li> </ul>	✓	Three-year cycle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Household items</li> <li>• Toys</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Initiated by parent</li> <li>• For free: Up to 8 activities per month</li> <li>• For cost: Up to 10 "play plans" per month</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Model</li> <li>• Text</li> <li>• Video instructions</li> </ul>
<p><b>WeeSchool</b> A mobile app with activities paired to monthly progress in developmental areas including language <a href="http://weeschool.com">weeschool.com</a></p>	0 to 3	Free	📶	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One-year cycle</li> <li>• New themes each year</li> </ul>	Household items	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sent by tool</li> <li>• 2 per week</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prompt</li> <li>• Text tips</li> <li>• Picture or video examples</li> </ul>

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## Resources and Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Barr, R., Brito, N., Zocca, J., Reina, S., Rodriguez, J., & Shauffer, C. (2011). The Baby Elmo program: Improving teen father-child interactions within juvenile justice facilities. *Children and Youth Services Review, 33*, 1555–1562.
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