

Activities to develop pre-school language skills and pre-literacy skills – ideas for parents

1. **Read, Read, and Read** - reading to your child and fully engaging in books with your preschooler is one great way to develop language. Finding books that your child likes and re-reading them helps to develop vocabulary, attention span, and comprehension.
2. Engage in **“fill in the blank”** play while reading books with your child. Any book can be used for this activity but books that have repetitive language are most helpful. While reading to your child, stop reading and have your child fill in the blank for you. Point to the words on the page as you do this. For Example, “Brown Bear Brown Bear what do you _____”.
3. Teach your child how to **rhyme**. Introduce rhyming and play rhyming games with your child. This is a great way to start to teach your child how to play with words and hear how sounds make up words. It also teaches them how sounds in words can be manipulated. Use rhyming books to help you with this such as book by Dr. Seuss (The Foot Book, Mr. Brown can Moo) and Eric Carle (The Very Busy Spider).
4. Play guessing games with your child. Make it concrete. Put an object in a brown paper bag and say to your child, “Guess what’s in the bag. I will give you clues”. “It’s red, you eat it, it’s a fruit, it’s sometimes green too”. This activity develops early **categorization** and **vocabulary** skills. Give them a turn to describe unknown things to you too.
5. Teach your child card games such as Go Fish, Bingo, and War. These games are great because many companies make decks of cards in these games that incorporate **number and letter recognition**.
6. Engage your child in activities that encourage the development of his/her **attention** span. Table top activities such as puzzles, play dough, arts and crafts are great. What do you do if your child does not like these activities? Try pairing them with an activity that they **do** like. For example if they like to watch TV say, “_____ do you want to watch TV? Ok well first let’s do this puzzle and then I will turn on your favorite show.” This sentence REALLY works. Repeat if needed. “_____ do you want to watch TV? Ok first let’s do this alphabet puzzle then I will put on your favorite show”. Make sure the table top activity is something that is easy enough for them to do so they do not get frustrated with having to sit. Make sure you reward them with their follow up activity. You can use this “pairing” to create scheduled activities with your child label them “Ok it’s “puzzle/TV time” or “playdough/ipad time”.
7. Don’t be afraid to correct or attempt to correct your child’s **articulation skills**. Many sounds are later developing sounds and will come in with time but by 5 years of age children should be able to say most sounds. Demonstrating the correct production of sounds and having your child look at you as you say the word can possibly avoid the need for assistance with this down the road.