

What you can do to help your child develop pre-reading skills:

Matching

- Dominoes
- Activity books which involve matching shapes, pictures and letters
- Pairing up socks from the laundry
- Jigsaw puzzles

Rhyming

- Sing nursery rhymes
- Miss of the end of rhymes for your child to complete, e.g. "Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall, Humpty Dumpty had a great...?"
- When that gets too easy for them, make it harder! "Humpty Dumpty sat in a tree, Humpty Dumpty had a cup of ...?"
- Play rhyming games such as "I Spy with my little eye, something that rhymes with fox" (box).
- Encourage your child to sing along to nursery rhymes, pop songs, whatever they enjoy.

Letter Skills

- Introduce letters and their sounds gradually
- Start with letters that are important to your child, such as their initial, all those with an interesting shape which makes them easy to recognise.
- Use letter sounds rather than names - 'a for ant', not 'ay for ape'. Letter sounds are much more useful in learning to read than names.
- Generally, stick to lower case letters to start with, except for the first letter of a name.
- Try using magnetic letters

Direction

- Your child won't need to know 'left' and 'right' in order to read - lots of adults still get mixed up!
- When reading to your child, follow the print with your finger.
- Later, you can ask them where you should start - try reading the words in reverse order, to demonstrate that the story doesn't make sense if you don't start in the right place.
- Many activity books have activities which reinforce left-right direction, such as exercises for the child to draw a line to take the bunny (on the left) to its hutch (on the right).

Motor Skills

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- Encourage your child to be creative, drawing and painting with lots of different tools and materials.
- Playing with small toys, especially construction sets will help to develop fine motor skills.
- Activity books with simple mazes and other exercises involving following a path.
- Using child-friendly scissors is a useful skill which also helps improve fine motor skills.

Concepts of Print

- Reading books with your child is the best way to help them learn how to handle books.
- Have a special place where books are kept, which is within your child's reach.
- Visit the library.
- Talk about the books you read - point out the title, ask them what they think the book will be about, what is going to happen next in the story, how are the characters behaving etc.

Language Skills

- Having conversations with your child about anything and everything is the best way to develop their language skills.
- Reading stories to them will broaden their vocabulary.
- Make sure that your child gets plenty of opportunity to talk to other adults and children

Numeracy skills!

There are lots of opportunities to help your child with maths at home. Here are a few ideas:

- **Counting** - early on you can count with your child and when they are able, ask them to count things. This could be counting the stairs up to bed, counting out six apples in the supermarket or the number of roads you cross on the way to school.
- **Telling the time** - at first you can talk about morning, dinner time, bedtime. Later you can point out o'clock times which relate to their lives, such as the need to be at school by 9 o'clock. Children also need to develop an idea of time passing. You could use a kitchen timer or egg timer to see if they can tidy away their toys or get dressed in less than three minutes.
- **Cooking together** - this provides lots of opportunities to develop maths skills. You will be measuring liquids (capacity) and solids (weight), counting and estimating.
- **Looking for numbers** - encourage your child to choose a number when you set out on a journey and see how many times they can spot their special number on registration plates, signs and house doors.