

Good speech leads to stronger reading and writing skills, says speech-language therapist

25 May 2015, by Stasia Thompson

Reading and writing skills, or literacy skills, begin to develop before a child can even read or write. Emergent literacy skills develop from birth to preschool age, around 3 years old. "During the preschool period, children see and interact with a variety of print at home, in the community and at daycare or school," says Kaitlin Vogtner Trainor, Speech language-pathologist at Loyola University Health System. "This exposure to print builds phonological awareness skills, the recognition that words are made up of separate speech sounds, which leads to stronger reading and writing skills later in life."

According to the American Speech Hearing Association (ASHA), signs that your child may be at risk for developing poor [literacy skills](#) include:

- Persistent baby talk
- Lack of interest in nursery rhyme or shared book reading
- Difficulty understanding simple directions
- Difficulty learning and/or remembering names of letters
- Difficulty recognizing and/or identifying letters in his/her name
- Difficulty expressing language

"There are actionable steps that a caregiver can do to help improve literacy skills," says Trainor. "Parents can even reverse some deficits without medical intervention."

Suggested tips to improve literacy include:

- Talk with your child during daily routines (e.g., getting ready for school, mealtime)
- Name objects, people, and events at home and in the community
- Repeat your child's string of sounds and add to them

- Respond to his or her questions
- Draw attention to print (e.g., traffic signs, store logos, food containers)
- Introduce new vocabulary words during holidays or special activities (e.g., birthdays, zoo, park)
- Singing songs
- Rhyming games
- Nursery rhymes
- Read picture and storybooks (e.g., Dr. Seuss) that focus on sounds, rhymes, and alliteration (i.e., words that start with the same sound)
- Point to words and pictures that you read and see in books
- Encourage drawing and scribbling using markers, crayons, paper, paint, etc.
- Encourage your child to describe or tell a story about his/her drawing and write down the words

"Early detection is key," says Trainor. "Speech-language pathologists play a crucial role in detecting, assessing, and providing intervention for children who may have or have difficulties developing strong literacy skills necessary for later reading and writing development."

Address any concerns about a child's speech and language development or literacy skills with a certified speech-language pathologist.

Provided by Loyola University Health System

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