

## **The 6 Early Literacy Skills in Books for Babies, Toddlers, and Preschoolers**

Whenever we read any picture book, we help build all six of the early literacy skills in our listeners. However, some books highlight certain skills especially well. As we plan early literacy storytimes, or prepare to talk with parents about books, it helps to have a few books at our fingertips that are related to each skill and appropriate for different age groups.

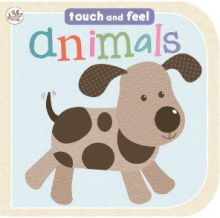
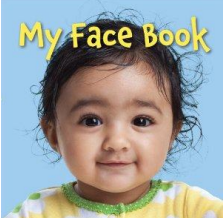
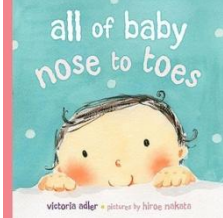
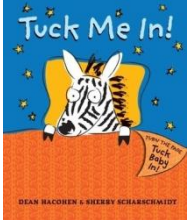
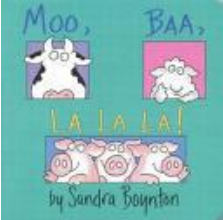


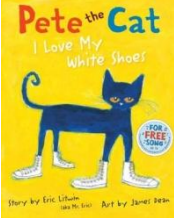

These groupings are not meant to be prescriptive, as each book supports multiple skills and can be enjoyed by children of all ages. But just as we can try to give age-appropriate tips to parents and caregivers during storytime, we can try to find books that support different skills in age-appropriate ways.

This handout is just a beginning guide. See the ELSIE: Early Literacy Storytime Ideas Exchange Database at <http://www.hclib.org/BirthTo6/ELSIE.cfm> for many more titles sorted by literacy skill, with presentation ideas for sharing tips with caregivers.

## The 6 Early Literacy Skills in Books for Babies, Toddlers, and Preschoolers

### Print Motivation


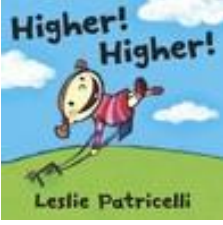
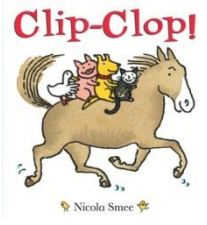
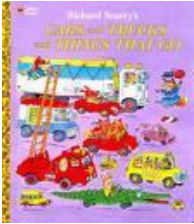
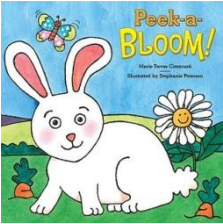

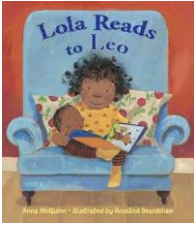

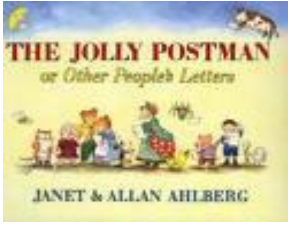
This skill is all about loving books, being interested in books, and enjoying reading!

<b>Babies</b> (birth- 24m)	 <p>Touch-and-feel books engage multiple senses, making read-aloud time more interactive and more fun for babies and young toddlers.</p>	 <p>Babies love to look at other babies! Photo books with large, clear images of baby faces are a great way to help them focus on the page.</p>	 <p>Books that are primarily lists of activities or objects make it easy to read as many or as few pages as hold a baby's interest, keeping storytime a positive experience.</p>
<b>Toddlers</b> (2-3 years)	 <p>Toddlers are old enough to manipulate lift-the-flaps. Looking for hidden pictures is very engaging!</p>	 <p>Silly books appeal to a young reader's developing sense of humor and help them create positive associations with books.</p>	 <p>Sharing books about a toddler's favorite things is a great way to keep them motivated about books.</p>
<b>Preschoolers</b> (4-5 years)	 <p>Follow a preschooler's fascinations and read non-fiction about the world around them. Let them know the things they love can be found in books!</p>	 <p>Books with repeated phrases and patterned texts make it easy for preschoolers to jump in and participate.</p>	 <p>Read an old favorite of yours. Your enthusiasm will be contagious!</p>

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### Print Awareness

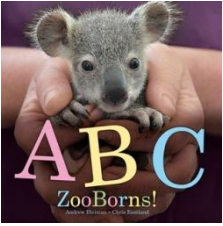
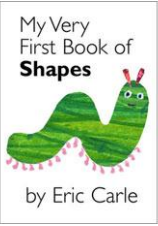

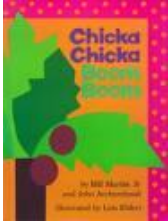


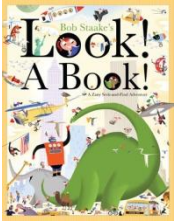
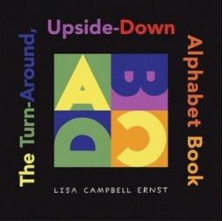
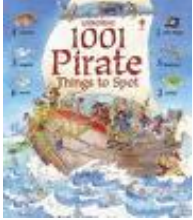
Print Awareness includes knowing how to handle a book, knowing print is in books, how to follow the words on a page, and noticing print everywhere.

<b>Babies</b> (birth- 24m)	 <p>Soft cloth or vinyl books allow even the youngest babies to explore books and learn how they work.</p>	 <p>Books with large print, repeated words (“No!”), word bubbles, or that have words incorporated into the illustrations make it easy to point to the text on the page as you read, which helps babies begin to learn that print carries meaning.</p>	
<b>Toddlers</b> (2-3 years)	 <p>Labeled pictures help children make the connection between the words they know and the print on the page.</p>	 <p>Some books for toddlers are printed on heavy cardstock pages, helping them transition from board books.</p>	 <p>Large, simple text surrounded by white space help children see the words being read.</p>
<b>Preschoolers</b> (4-5 years)	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; align-items: flex-start;">    </div> <p>Books about reading and writing are great ways to help build a child's interest in and awareness of books and print.</p>		

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### Letter Knowledge

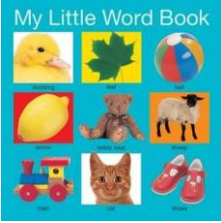
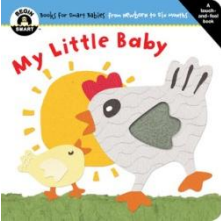

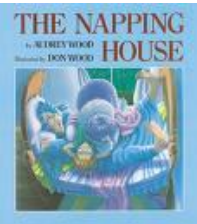
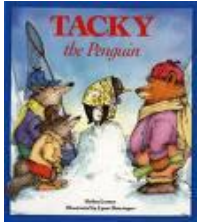



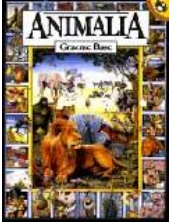
This skill includes knowing that letters are different from each other, and knowing that letters have different names and different sounds.

<b>Babies</b> (birth- 24m)	 <p>ABC books for babies and young toddlers should have very simple letter shapes to minimize distractions.</p>	  <p>Shape recognition is one of the foundation skills of letter knowledge. Sharing shape and opposites books with young toddlers will help start building their ability to tell shapes—and later letters--apart.</p>
<b>Toddlers</b> (2-3 years)	  <p>Of course ABC books build Letter Knowledge skills! Make sure alphabet books for toddlers are clean and simple, so they can focus on the letter shapes.</p>	
<b>Preschoolers</b> (4-5 years)	 <p>Preschoolers are starting to learn letter sounds as well as letter shapes. You can use I Spy books to look for objects that start with a certain sound.</p>	  <p>Preschoolers are also ready for more sophisticated alphabet books that play with letter shapes, letter sounds, and vocabulary!</p> <p>Search-and-find books give kids a chance to practice differentiating between shapes and objects. Make sure the books are not too tough and not too easy.</p>

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### Vocabulary

Vocabulary is knowing the names of things.

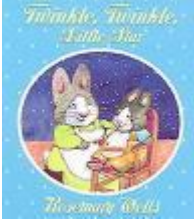
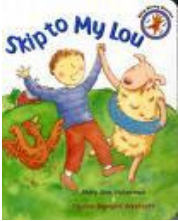

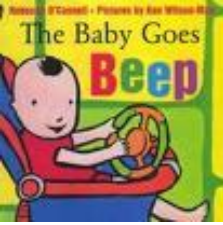
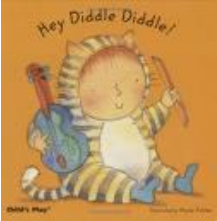


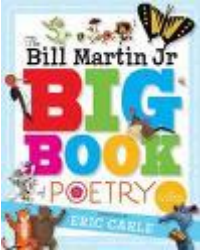
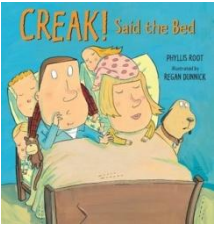
<b>Babies</b> (birth- 24m)	 <p>Describing objects to babies builds their narrative skills and adds more words to their vocabularies. Word books offer great opportunities for these dialogs!</p>	 <p>Hearing words repeated in context is one way babies learn new words.</p>	 <p>Songs that list or name objects, like Head Shoulders Knees and Toes or Old MacDonald Had a Farm, are one way to introduce new words to babies!</p>
<b>Toddlers</b> (2-3 years)	 	 <p>Non-fiction books are amazing vocabulary builders!</p>	
<b>Preschoolers</b> (4-5 years)	<p>Reading picture books builds vocabulary because they have more “rare” words than our casual conversation. For instance, the nappers in the Napping House are not just <i>sleeping</i>; they are <i>dozing</i>, <i>cozy</i>, <i>snoring</i>, and <i>dreaming</i>. Tacky lives with his <i>companions</i>, not his <i>friends</i>.</p>	 <p>Books that incorporate questions to the reader are great conversation starters. The more we talk with our children, the larger their vocabularies will be.</p>	 <p>Often ABC books are full of objects to name and things to discuss! Younger children will need simpler pictures to be successful.</p>



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### Phonological Awareness

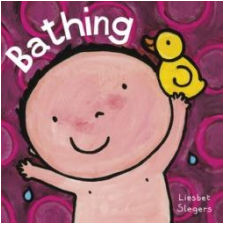
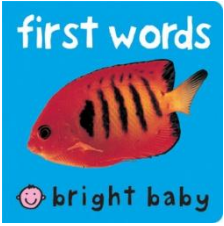
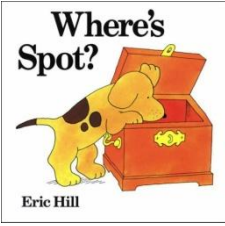



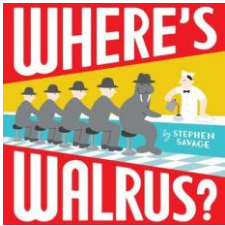
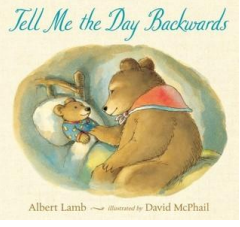


Children with this skill can hear and play with the smaller sounds in words, both syllables and individual sounds. They understand rhyme.

<b>Babies</b> (birth- 24m)	  	 <p>Books that celebrate noises all around give babies practice in listening to the sounds of our spoken language.</p>	 
<b>Toddlers</b> (2-3 years)	<p>Singing to children is a great way to help them hear the smaller sounds in words.</p>	 <p>Imitating animal noises is a great way for toddlers to practice making language sounds!</p>	 <p>Reading Mother Goose books and sharing poetry with children are some of the best ways to build phonological awareness skills.</p>
<b>Preschoolers</b> (4-5 years)	<p>Books that contain simple, familiar songs are good choices even for the youngest listeners; toddlers will appreciate songs with multiple verses; preschoolers will enjoy song collections that keep everyone singing!</p>	 <p>Look for books with rhyming words and a good rhythm to the language, even if they aren't written in formal "poem" stanzas.</p>	<p>One rhyme per book is best for babies, while one rhyme per page works well for toddlers. Preschoolers are ready for longer collections!</p>

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### Narrative Skills

This skill includes being able to describe things and events, being able to tell events in order and retell stories.

<b>Babies</b> (birth- 24m)	 <p>Short and simple stories about daily routines begin to introduce young listeners to how stories work.</p>	 <p>Photos of objects surrounded by plenty of “white” space allow children to focus on one item while you describe it.</p>	 <p>Books with text that contains questions and answers help introduce babies into the patterns of spoken language.</p>
<b>Toddlers</b> (2-3 years)	 <p>Repetitive books help children practice predicting what comes next in a story.</p>	  <p>Hearing different versions of familiar folktales helps make children aware of the basic structure of a story.</p>	
<b>Preschoolers</b> (4-5 years)	 <p>Stories that explore daily events, the passing seasons, or the steps involved in making something, help children understand sequence.</p>	 <p>Hearing different versions of familiar folktales helps make children aware of the basic structure of a story.</p>	 <p>Wordless and nearly wordless books let children tell stories in their own words.</p>