

## Use POP to help children learn about print

Just being exposed to the printed word is not enough for children to develop print knowledge. If children are to learn that it's the print, not the illustrations, that tells the story or that letters of the alphabet have names, then adults must draw their attention to how print functions.

**POP** (Point Out Print) is a strategy that helps children acquire print knowledge during book reading and many other daily activities that include print. As you POP, children's awareness of print grows and they start to talk about and experiment with the letters and words they see.

### Adults lead the way to print knowledge

Children learn the most when adults directly involve them in the use of print, as Jemma does when she gets a four-year-old to help her prepare a grocery list.

"Okay," Jemma says, picking up a pen, "let's make our grocery list for tomorrow's lunch. We need fish. So let's write 'fish.'" Jemma names the letters one by one as she writes them. Jemma says, "That says 'fish.' See? 'Fish' begins with the letter F. Frank, what letter does your name start with?" "F," says Frank, "just like 'fish.'"

By being engaged in an enjoyable and meaningful activity, Frank is learning about the purpose of print and acquiring important knowledge about the letters of the alphabet.



There are different ways to POP. Some are **non-verbal** and involve pointing to or tracking print with your finger, without saying anything. Other ways to POP are **verbal** and include asking children a question or making a comment or a request. Very often, you will combine non-verbal and verbal uses of POP to give children optimal input.

How you POP depends on the situation and the children's needs. If you don't want to interrupt a story, POP non-verbally by pointing to or tracking print so a response is not required. If you are working with children who are inattentive, POP verbally to engage them by asking a question or requesting that they do something in relation to print. If you are working with children who are reluctant communicators or who have language impairments, use comments to give them an opportunity to process what they are learning without their having to say or do anything.



# Examples of using POP non-verbally and verbally

## Print knowledge being pointed out

- Print is meaningful
- Print represents spoken language
- Print is different from illustrations
- Print communicates a message or tells a story

## Examples of POP (Point Out Print)

**Point to print** (touch with your finger if possible) as you read books, as well as when you read print in the environment.

**Point** to the string of Z's beside a picture of someone sleeping and explain that the Z's indicate the sound of deep breathing during sleep.

**Ask a question:** "What do all the Z's beside the sleeping man mean?"

**Make a comment:** Say, "Here is what the mother said to her little boy," while you point to the speech balloon containing the mother's words.

**Point** to the illustration and make a comment: "This picture shows us what the boy and the dog in the story look like."

**Point and comment:** "These are the words that tell us the story. I'm reading the words so you can find out what happens to the boy and his dog."

## Books are used in a specific way:

- We hold books right side up
- We turn pages from front to back
- Books have a beginning and an end
- Books have a front and a back
- Books have a title
- Books have an author
- Books have an illustrator

**Point and comment:** "We start reading on the first page. Here's the first page, right after the page that tells us the name of the book."

**Point and comment:** "This is the front/back/beginning/end of the book."

**Ask a question:** "Where do we start reading the story?"

**Make a request:** "Show me where the title of the book is."

**Point and comment:** "This name here is the illustrator's name. It says 'Michael Martchenko.' Michael Martchenko is the person who drew all the pictures in this book."

## We read print in a specific direction.

Introduce the direction of print in the following order, one direction at a time to avoid confusion:

- from top to bottom of page
- from left to right of page
- from left to right on each line

**Track print while you read aloud** by moving your finger under the words, starting at the top of the page, moving from left to right, going back to the beginning of the next line, until you reach the bottom of the page. Start tracking again when you turn the page.

**Ask a question:** "Where do we start reading?"

**Make a request:** "Show me where I should read next."

**Track with your finger while you comment:** "I start to read the words at the top of the page, and then I read all the way down the page until I get to the end of the page, here at the bottom. Then I go back up to the top of the next page."