



Book Reading Checklist for Parents:

How am I building my child's early literacy skills?

The road to literacy starts long before your child begins to read and write on her own. As a parent, you play a key role in building the “emergent literacy skills” that prepare your child for success in school: **oral language, vocabulary, story comprehension, print knowledge, and sound awareness.**

When you spend time sharing books with your child, you're helping her build these important skills. But frequent book reading is just one part of helping your child learn – exactly *how* you share the book also makes a difference.

The Hanen Centre developed this book reading checklist to help you take a look at how you've been sharing books with your child and what other things you might do to maximize your child's learning.

Part A – How You Share Books

Take a moment to think about how you typically read to your child...

| | Once a week | A few times a week | Often |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| How often do you read to your child? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

↳ **What we know:** Children who are read to frequently become better readers.

| | Rarely | Sometimes | Often |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Do you read the same book over and over again on different days? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

↳ **What we know:** Reading the same book many times gives your child opportunities to think more deeply about the story and to remember and use new words. Plus, children love repetition!

| | Rarely | Sometimes | Often |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Do you pause during the reading to talk about what interests your child? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

↳ **What we know:** When you pause during the book reading to talk about the story and what interests your child, you provide lots of opportunities for her to think and talk about the story and to hear and use new words.

| | Rarely | Sometimes | Often |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Do you ask questions during the reading and explain what is happening to make sure your child understands the story? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

↳ **What we know:** Talking about the important parts of a story (for example, the characters, setting, problem, actions, and resolution) makes it easier for your child to make sense of the story, and it prepares her for understanding the stories she will read later on.

| | Rarely | Sometimes | Often |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Do you ask questions to encourage your child to think about the story (e.g. Questions that start with “Why...?”, “What do you think about...?”, “What would you do if...?”) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Do you talk about the story and make connections to your own lives? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Do you ask your child to guess what might happen next in the story? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

↳ **What we know:** To fully understand a book, your child needs to use her problem-solving and reasoning skills to find meaning beyond what’s written on the page or found in the illustrations. You can encourage this by connecting the story to your child’s knowledge and experience and by asking your child what she would do in the same situation as the main character.

| | Rarely | Sometimes | Often |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Do you explain what unfamiliar words mean? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Do you relate new words to your child’s experience? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Do you repeat new words in different situations? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

↳ **What we know:** Studies show that the more words children understand as preschoolers, the better their reading comprehension will be later on. You can build your child’s vocabulary by stressing new words, talking about what the word means and relating it to your child’s experience.

| | Rarely | Sometimes | Often |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Do you track the words with your finger as you read to your child? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Do you show your child how we read from left to right and from top to bottom on a page? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Do you point out upper and lower case letters and punctuation marks? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

↳ **What we know:** There are many things your child must learn about print before she can read and write on her own. For example, she’ll need to know that letters of the alphabet combine to make words and that print is read from left to right. As you read with your child, you can point out and talk about some of these print ideas to help your child learn.



| | Rarely | Sometimes | Often |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Do you draw your child's attention to letters and make the sound that the letter makes (e.g. "That's the letter 'S'. 'S' makes the sound sss?") | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Do you draw your child's attention to words that rhyme? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

↳ **What we know:** To be prepared to read, children must understand that words can be broken down into smaller sounds, and that letters correspond to certain sounds. One fun way to build this "sound awareness" is to draw your child's attention to two rhyming words and ask her to think of a third word that sounds similar (for example, "Look, 'bear' rhymes with 'chair'. Do you hear how they sound similar at the end? *Bear. Chair.* Can you think of another word that rhymes with 'chair'?)



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Part B – How Your Child Participates in Book Reading

Your child will learn early literacy skills best when she is paying attention and is actively involved (for example, by pointing out the pictures and thinking and talking about the story.)

Think about how your child participates when you share books together.

| | Rarely | Sometimes | Often |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| My child listens to the whole book. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| My child points out things in the pictures. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| My child makes comments or asks questions about things in the book. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| My child answers my questions. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| My child acts out parts of the story. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Take the Next Step!

Would you like your child to be more attentive or actively involved when you share books?

Take a look back at Part A to see what you've been doing when sharing books. Are there some new things you could try to enhance your child's learning?

Jot down your ideas below.

Notes

The Hanen Centre supports parents and professionals to help young children develop the best possible early language and literacy skills. For more tips on making the most of book reading to build your child's early literacy skills, go to www.hanen.org/literacy-at-home