

Learning on the Go: Literacy Tips for Young Children

Ready, Set, Write!

Writing skills begin long before a child goes to school. In order to become writers someday, babies and young children need to strengthen their fingers and hands, practice fine motor skills, and make their eyes and hands work together. They do this by—PLAYING!

Babies love to hold, feel, and manipulate things. They like to shake rattles, bang spoons on pots, pick up small pieces of food, stroke stuffed animals, play with soap, and turn pages on a board book. All these activities help them get ready for writing. When baby is a little older, you can show her how you write and give her fat markers so she can help. Toddlers can make marks on your grocery list or “sign” a card to grandma. Everyday play and activities—such as finger painting, molding play dough, holding a spoon or toothbrush, playing with wooden puzzles, and turning the pages of books—can strengthen muscles and hone fine motor skills.

Preschoolers really start to understand what writing is all about. Give preschoolers easy access to writing materials and help them start to learn to recognize and write some letters. Maybe your preschooler can draw a picture for grandpa and even sign it with one or two letters of his name! It’s very important to reward all efforts at writing at this age—don’t worry that your child is not making the letters exactly “right.” Also help him improve his fine motor skills by teaching him how to use scissors and providing puzzles and toys with small pieces to manipulate.

With lots of opportunities to use her hands playing and writing, your child will be ready for blackboards and pencils when she goes to school!