

Early Literacy Online Resource Guide

This guide consists of a selection of early literacy best practices and resources that public libraries can use as a guide for their own websites in order to promote early literacy to parents, caregivers and early childhood educators.

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2. Definition of "early literacy"
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This guide was developed as a result of a study done by [Vivienne Houghton](#) for her capstone project at the University of Denver's Master's in Library and Information Science Program.

Capstone: *Early Literacy Information on the Websites of Colorado's Public Libraries*
[website](#)
[slides](#)
[pdf](#)

1. Colorado State Library's Early Literacy Resources

As long as you aren't going to sell copies, feel free to download and copy. Just, please, give the Colorado State Library credit. To order brochures in bulk for free, visit the State Library's [Brochures Ordering Page](#).

[Reading Tips for Parents](#)

This brochure offers tips and ideas on how to read to children and how to set an atmosphere for reading activities. It also includes general reading tips and age appropriate ideas and techniques. English and Spanish. (Ages 0-6)

[Kindergarten Readiness "Ready? Set? Go!"](#)

This brochure offers tips and ideas on what children should know in order to function well from the beginning of kindergarten, along with ideas for parents and caregiver for activities. English and Spanish. (Ages 4-5)



2. Definition of "early literacy"

Early literacy is what children know about reading and writing before they can actually read or write

Best Practices

[Denver Public Library's Babble, Scribble, Read!](#)

"Early literacy is what children know about reading and writing before they can actually read or write."

[Westminster Public Library's Early Literacy Website](#)

"Early literacy is what children know about reading and writing before they can actually read and write. Research shows that children get ready to read years before they start school."

From [Early Literacy Storytimes @ your library](#)

"According to the NICHD, early literacy is what children know about reading and writing before they actually learn to read and write. To clarify, early literacy is not the teaching of reading. It is building a foundation for reading so that when children are taught to read, they are ready."

(Ghoting, S. N., & Martin-Díaz, P. (2006). Early Literacy Storytimes @ your library. Chicago, IL: American Library Association. P. 5)

3. Description of Early Literacy Skills

The American Library Association (ALA) has two versions of Every Child Ready to Read (ECRR):

- The first edition ECRR1, which was introduced in 2004, focuses on the Six Early Literacy Skills: Vocabulary, Print Motivation, Narrative Skills, Print Awareness, Letter Knowledge, Phonological Awareness.



- The second edition ECRR2, which was introduced in 2011, focuses on Five Activities: Talking, Singing, Reading, Writing and Playing.

Best Practices

[Colorado Libraries for Early Literacy](#)

[ECRR1 and ECRR2](#): Description of both programs

[ECRR1](#): A definition for each of the Six Early Literacy Skills along with why it's important and what parents can do to help build the skill

[Westminster Public Library's Early Literacy Website](#)

ECRR1: A webpage for each of the Six Early Literacy Skills with tips on how to reinforce the skill and lists of recommended books

[High Plains Library District's Early Literacy Brochure](#)

ECRR1: A table of the Six Early Literacy Skills with detailed descriptions, tips and suggested books

[Poudre River Public Library's Raising Readers](#)

ECRR2: An explanation of how each of the Five Activities helps to build early literacy skills

From [Early Literacy Storytimes @ your library](#)

- Print motivation: a child's interest in and enjoyment of books
- Phonological awareness: the ability to hear and play with the smaller sounds in words
- Vocabulary: knowing the names of things
- Narrative skills: the ability to describe things and events and to tell stories
- Print awareness: noticing print, knowing how to handle a book, and understanding how to follow the written words on a page
- Letter knowledge: knowing that letters are different from each other, that the same letter can look different and that each letter has a name and is related to sounds

(Ghoting, S. N., & Martin-Díaz, P. (2006). *Early Literacy Storytimes @ your library*. Chicago, IL: American Library Association. P. 4)

4. Benefits of Building Early Literacy Skills

Research shows that building early literacy skills has links to positive effects on early brain development,

improved school readiness and later success in life.

Best Practices

[Denver Public Library's Babble, Scribble, Read!](#)

References are made to research by the Policy Information Center of Educational Testing Service that shows the growing literacy gap between American social classes that has been traced to kindergarten.

[Jefferson County Public Library](#) has developed a video with information on brain development during the first five years of life, research on preparing children for success as readers and learners, early literacy skills and storytimes:

[Early Literacy: How Young Children Get Ready to Read by Jefferson County Public Library](#)



5. The Importance of Reading Aloud

It is important to read aloud to children every day.

Best Practices

[Denver Public Library's Baby Section](#)

Brochures explaining to parents and caregiver how to read aloud to children, available in both [English \(PDF\)](#) and [Español \(PDF\)](#)

[Broomfield's Mamie Doud Eisenhower Library](#)

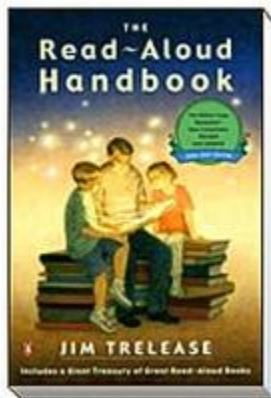
The [Parent & Caregiver Resources](#) brochure lists books and websites on reading aloud and other topics useful for caregivers of children ages newborn - 12 years.

In [A Script for Success](#), Arnold and Colburn (2004) provide the following talking points for librarians to share with parents:

- “The sooner you start sharing books with your baby, the more likely she will be interested in them. It’s never too early.”

- “Read for just a short time, many times a day. Make books part of her everyday life by having them available for her.”
- “Children who are read to three times per week or more do much better in later development than children who are read to less than three times per week.” (Arnold, R., & Colburn, N. (2004). A script for success. *School Library Journal*, 50 (9), 39.)

[The Read-Aloud Handbook by Jim Trelease](#)



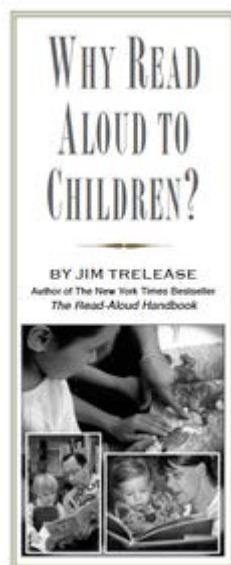
"There is one skill that matters above all others, because it is the prime predictor of school success or failure: the child’s vocabulary upon entering school."

"There are really only two efficient ways to get words into a person's brain: either through the eye or through the ear. Since it'll be years before the eye is used for reading, the best source for ideas and brain building in a young child becomes the ear. What we send into that ear becomes the "sound" foundation for the rest of the child's

"brain house." Those meaningful sounds in the ear now will help the child make sense of the words coming in through the eye later when learning to read."

Trelease, J. (2006). *The Read-aloud handbook: Sixth edition*. New York, NY: Penguin Books.

[Free Brochures: Why Read Aloud to Children?](#)



"We read aloud to children for the same reasons we talk with them: to reassure; entertain; bond; inform; arouse curiosity; and inspire. But reading aloud goes further than conversation when it:

- Conditions the child to associate reading with pleasure;
- Creates background knowledge;
- Builds “book” vocabulary;
- Provides a reading role model"

[Seek permission](#) from Jim Trelease on printing the following and many other free brochures

How to Read Aloud by Mem Fox

[Introduction](#)

[And Do It Like This](#)

[Ten read-aloud commandments](#)

Reading Magic by Mem Fox (2012)



Reading Magic: How your child can learn to read before school and other read-aloud miracles
(New Australian edition, also in e-book, August 2012)

Reading Magic by Mem Fox (2001)



Reading Magic: Why Reading Aloud to Our Children Will Change Their Lives Forever (Harcourt, 2001)

Mem Fox's Ten Read Aloud Commandments

1. Spend at least ten wildly happy minutes *every single day* reading aloud.
2. Read at least three stories a day: it may be the same story three times. Children need to hear a thousand stories before they can begin to learn to read.
3. Read aloud with animation. Listen to your own voice and don't be dull, or flat, or boring. Hang loose and be loud, have fun and laugh a lot.
4. Read with joy and enjoyment: real enjoyment for yourself and great joy for the listeners.
5. Read the stories that the kids love, over and over and over again, and always read in the same 'tune' for each book: i.e. with the same intonations on each page, each time.

6. Let children hear lots of language by talking to them constantly about the pictures, or anything else connected to the book; or sing any old song that you can remember; or say nursery rhymes in a bouncy way; or be noisy together doing clapping games.
 7. Look for rhyme, rhythm or repetition in books for young children, and make sure the books are really short.
 8. Play games with the things that you and the child can see on the page, such as letting kids finish rhymes, and finding the letters that start the child's name and yours, remembering that it's never work, it's always a fabulous game.
 9. Never ever *teach* reading, or get tense around books.
 10. Please read aloud every day, mums and dads, because you just love being with your child, not because it's the right thing to do.
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6. Reading Aloud to Babies

It is never too early to start. Reading aloud to babies begins at birth.



Born to Read, It's Never Too Early to Start!



Born to Read! by the Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC) is aimed at providing early literacy resources to library staff as they help expectant and new parents to become aware that reading to a baby from birth is critical to every baby's growth and well being. ALSC suggests the following talking points to help librarians communicate the Born to Read message to new parents:

- Everyone can do it: Reading aloud together teaches your child that books are important and that reading is a shared positive and nurturing experience
- It's important: Pediatricians recommend reading aloud to your child every day; it is important to incorporate reading aloud into your daily routine, such as during play or at bedtime
- It's never too early to start: Reading aloud with your baby from birth

helps your child get ready to learn; Research shows that babies who are read to in the first nine months of their lives are better prepared for school compared to babies who have had little interaction with books

7. Resources in Other Languages

[*¡Colorín Colorado!*](#)



A bilingual website that provides information, activities, and advice for educators, and Spanish-speaking families of English language learners (ELLs).

[*Reading Rockets Reading Tips for Parents in 10 Languages*](#)



Spanish, Arabic, Traditional Chinese, Haitian Creole, Hmong, Korean, Navajo, Russian, Tagalog, Vietnamese

[*International Children's Digital Library*](#)



Based on the principle that families deserve to have access to the books of their culture regardless of where they live, this website is a digital library of more than 10,000 international children's books in at least 100 languages.

[*Early Literacy Handouts*](#)

Created by [Jefferson County Public Library](#)

Español

- [Conocer Las Letras](#)
- [Aprender Nuevas Palabras](#)
- [Encantarse De Los Libros](#)
- [Jugar Con Los Sonidos](#)
- [Compartir Sobre los Libros](#)
- [Contar Historias](#)
- [Usar Libros](#)

English

- [Know Letters](#)
- [Learn New Words](#)
- [Love Books](#)
- [Play with Sounds](#)
- [Talk about Books](#)
- [Tell Stories](#)
- [Use Books](#)

8. StoryBlocks

StoryBlocks

StoryBlocks on www.storyblocks.org is a collection of 30-60 second online videos designed to model to parents, caregivers, and library staff some songs, rhymes, and fingerplays appropriate for early childhood. Each video clip includes helpful early literacy tips to increase caregivers' understanding of child development and pre-literacy needs.

Wake Up Toes by Jessica Hodgeman Hesselberg and her son, Owen



Colorado Libraries for Early Literacy is passionately committed to strengthening children's literacy through library services and community advocacy. CLEL produced StoryBlocks in partnership with Rocky Mountain Public Broadcasting Services.

Cuckoo by Cliff Davidson



Debajo de un botón by Chufo Ramirez



Los Elefantes by Mary Kuehner



9. Research

Brain development

When parents talk, read, sing, play, touch and cuddle with their babies, the brain evolves in response to experiences and the environment. Moreover, daily routines such as feeding, bathing, and playing strengthen neurons and increase myelination.

(Stamm, J., & Spencer, P. (2007). *Bright from the start: The simple, science-backed way to nurture your child's developing mind from birth to age 3*. New York, NY: Gotham.)

Neuroscientific research confirms that the architecture of a developing child's brain is not only shaped in the early years of life but is also significantly influenced by the child's environment.

(Ounce of Prevention Fund. (n.d.). The Ounce campaign for early learning. Chicago. Page 6. Retrieved from <http://www.ounceofprevention.org/home/index.php>)

Reading Aloud

“The single most important activity for building the knowledge required for eventual success in reading is reading aloud to children.”

(Richard C. Anderson, Elfrieda H. Hiebert, Judith A. Scott, Ian A.G. Wilkinson, *Becoming a Nation of Readers: The Report of the Commission on Reading*. Champaign-Urbana, IL: Center for the Study of Reading, 1985, p. 23.)

Parents, caregivers and early childhood educators can “foster their children’s healthy cognitive and emotional development, like talking to the children beginning in infancy, reading to them from a very early age, and helping them play simple games.”

(Ounce of Prevention and Zero to Three. (2000). *Starting smart: How early experiences affect brain development*. Page 7. Retrieved from <http://www.zerotothree.org/>)

Building Children's Vocabulary

Given an environment that promotes reading and talking, children can quickly develop their vocabulary. On average, children can pronounce 50 words by age 18 months, 1,000 words by 36 months and 6,000 words by age six. This process continues as the child masters a language, which in the case of English requires the mastery of about 50,000 words.

(Medina, J. (2010). *Brain rules for baby: How to raise a smart and happy child from zero to five*. Seattle, WA: Pear Press, p. 111).

Children's vocabulary growth reflects parental vocabulary levels where "86 percent to 98 percent of the words recorded in each child's vocabulary consisted of words also recorded in their parents' vocabularies." Moreover, longitudinal research shows that vocabulary use at age three not only reflects parental vocabulary, it is also predictive of language skills at age nine or ten.

(Hart, B., & Risley, T. R. (2003). The early catastrophe: The 30 million word gap by age 3. *American Educator*, 1(Spring), 4-9.)

"Books contain many words that children are unlikely to encounter frequently in spoken language. Children's books actually contain 50% more rare words than primetime television or even college students conversations."

(Reach Out and Read. (n.d.). Why is reading aloud to young children so important? Retrieved from <http://www.reachoutandread.org/impact/importance.aspx>)