

# Welcome, Parents and Caregivers!

The journey toward becoming a reader and writer starts early. It begins at birth with the sounds, songs, and stories children hear from the people who love and care for them. These sounds turn into simple words, then sentences, then full conversations. All the new words and information children learn from talking together helps them become readers and writers!

**As a parent or caregiver, you play a key role in helping your child experience the joy of talking, reading, and writing.**

Whether you're at home or on the go, make the most of the everyday moments you have together. Connect with your child, and have fun sharing conversations, stories, and scribbles.

This guide is filled with information and tools to help you turn every day into a reading and writing day! Each of the three sections, **Talking**, **Reading**, and **Writing**, provides helpful tips and fun activities you can share together. Choose the ideas you think would work best for you and your family. **Let's get started!**

**Keep learning!** For more information, videos, games, and activities, please visit [sesamestreet.org/literacy](http://sesamestreet.org/literacy)!



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## Every Day is a Talking Day

When you really pay attention and listen to your child, you're showing her that her thoughts and words are important to you. When you respond lovingly, she'll be motivated to talk and communicate more. Remember, conversations come to life when you take many "back-and-forth" turns to listen and talk.

**As you take the time to listen and talk together, you are laying the foundation for reading and writing!**

### Everyday Talking Tips:

- » **Talk about anything and everything!** Have conversations during daily routines like getting dressed, cooking, eating, or shopping together. You might also describe an interesting situation you see as you're out and about. "Look! The firefighter is using a wrench to turn on the fire hydrant."
- » **Sing and rhyme!** Have fun with the sounds of language by enjoying different kinds of songs, poems, and rhymes together. You might even make up new lyrics to a tune you both know on the radio.
- » **Ask questions that keep the conversation going.** Ask questions that encourage more than a yes or no answer. For example, instead of saying, "Did you have a fun day?" you might ask, "What made you happy today?"
- » **Use big and interesting words.** Your child can learn and say new, big, and unusual words. He just needs you to explain what they mean and hear you say them often in your conversations! For example, during bath time, say, "Look, the sponge absorbs the water!"
- » **Encourage your child to hear and speak more than one language.** Exposing children to more than one language at a time is not confusing at all. It actually boosts their thinking and social skills!

### Fun & Games:

- » **Three-Word Challenge:** Take turns picking an object you see and use three words to describe it. For instance, "My shoe is blue, rubbery, and stinky."
- » **Photo Share:** Look through photos in albums, on walls, or in your smartphone or tablet device. This is a great way to have a conversation about people you care about and share fun stories and memories.

### Talking with Babies:

Your baby's smiles, coos, and squeals are her way of talking with you! Coo and babble back, make faces, and imitate your baby's sounds. Try to also talk about everything you and your baby are doing as you go about your day. Language develops from these small beginnings and early conversations.



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# Talking Together at Home and On The Go

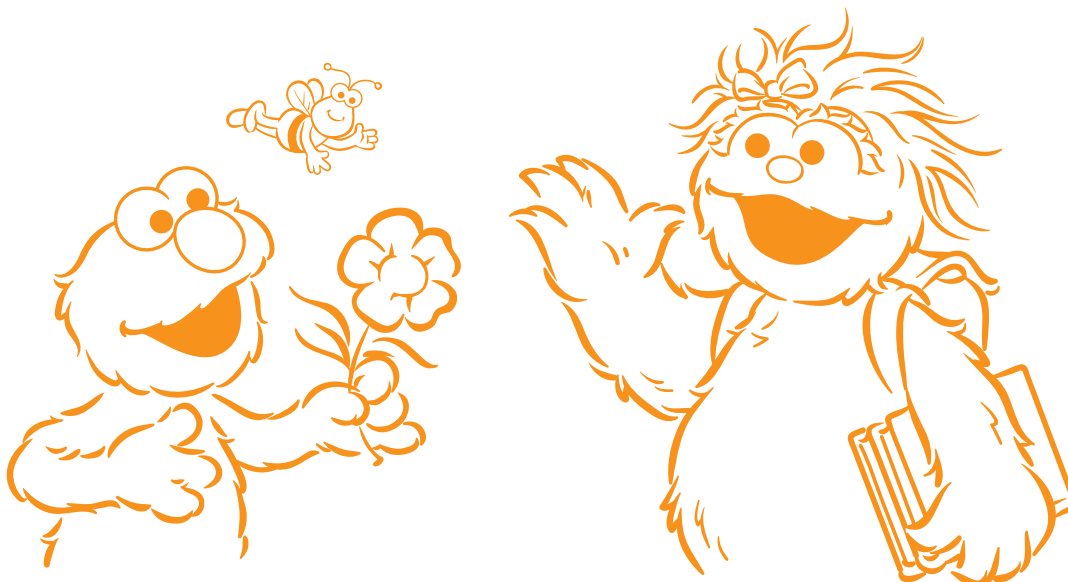
Ordinary moments spark rich conversations! To a young child, it's the everyday moments that are the most interesting and fascinating. Here are some ways to add fun and colorful language to daily experiences.

## As you...

- » get dressed
- » cook in the kitchen
- » use kitchen tools
- » walk down a street
- » observe an insect up close
- » look up at the clouds
- » walk through a park or field
- » drop mail in the mailbox
- » see a firefighter or police officer
- » get ready for bed

## you might say or ask...

- » "What body parts do you have a pair of?"
- » "Let's chop...mix...pour...spread...shake!"
- » "What is this tool used for, and how does it work?"
- » "What kinds of stores do you see? What kinds of vehicles do you see?"
- » "Look, an ant! Where do you think it's going?"
- » "What shapes or animals do you see in the clouds?"
- » "What's alive? Not alive? How do you know?"
- » "How do you think this letter will travel to Grandma?"
- » "A firefighter helps keep us safe when there's a fire. What other people have important jobs?"
- » "What did we do today? What was your favorite part of your day?"



# Big Bird's Everyday Conversation Cards

Here are some cards to help you spark big and rich conversations during your child's everyday routines. Cut them out, and keep them in a place that will make it easy for you and your child to look at them together each day. You might keep the "walking," "shopping," and "in the car" cards in your wallet; the "mealtime" card taped on a wall where you eat; and the "bedtime" card on your child's bedroom wall.

## Getting Dressed

What are you excited to do today? Who are you going to see?



## Mealtime

What is the happiest thing that happened to you today? The saddest thing? The silliest thing?



## In the Car

Tell me about a time you felt happy...sad...frustrated...excited...surprised!



## Shopping

What are some kinds of fruits? Vegetables? Dairy? Meats? Seafood?

## Walking

What letters do you see? Words? Shapes? Colors?



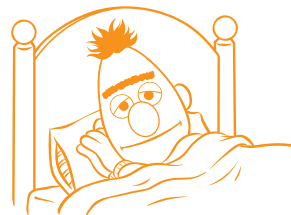
## Snack Time

What does your food look like? What does it taste like?



## Bath Time

Which toys float and which toys sink? Do the big toys always sink?



## Bedtime

Once upon a time, I was a superhero named...

# Every Day is a Reading Day

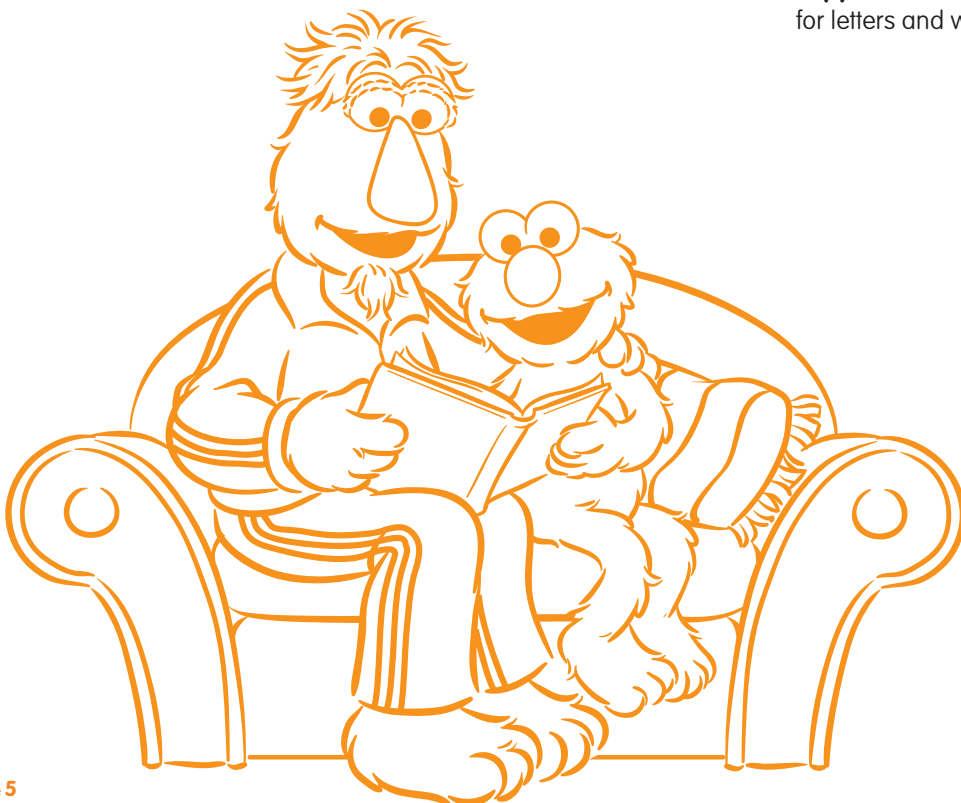
Exploring books and print together is fun for any child at any age both because he likes to learn new words and because he loves being close to you! Reading aloud together every day makes the biggest difference in helping him become a reader and writer.

## Everyday Reading Tips:

- » **Let your child see you reading.** You are your child's role model, so let her see that you enjoy reading books, magazines, newspapers, and other print materials. This will motivate her to read too!
- » **Cuddle up!** Your child loves to be close to you, and reading provides wonderful opportunities to bond and spend quality time together.
- » **Let your child enjoy the same book again and again.** It's an important way for him to remember information and learn new words.
- » **Visit the library.** It's a wonderful place for your child to find and borrow all kinds of books and magazines.

## Fun & Games:

- » **From Trash to Treasure:** Instead of throwing "junk mail" away, pick out the ones with interesting pictures and words to look at with your child. For example, you can explore all different types of tools in a hardware-store catalog!
- » **Surprise Notes:** Write a short and sweet note or make a simple drawing (like a heart or happy face) to put into your child's backpack or lunch box each day.
- » **Our Very Own Recording:** Using your computer or smartphone, create a recording of a family member reading the story. This way, your child can enjoy listening to your voice anytime and follow along.
- » **I Spy Letters:** Play a game of "I Spy Letters" by looking for letters and words around you.



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# Reading Together On the Go: Words Are Everywhere!

Reading doesn't just have to happen at bedtime. You and your child can read anytime, anywhere! There are words all around you, so take time to point them out and read them together.

## As you...

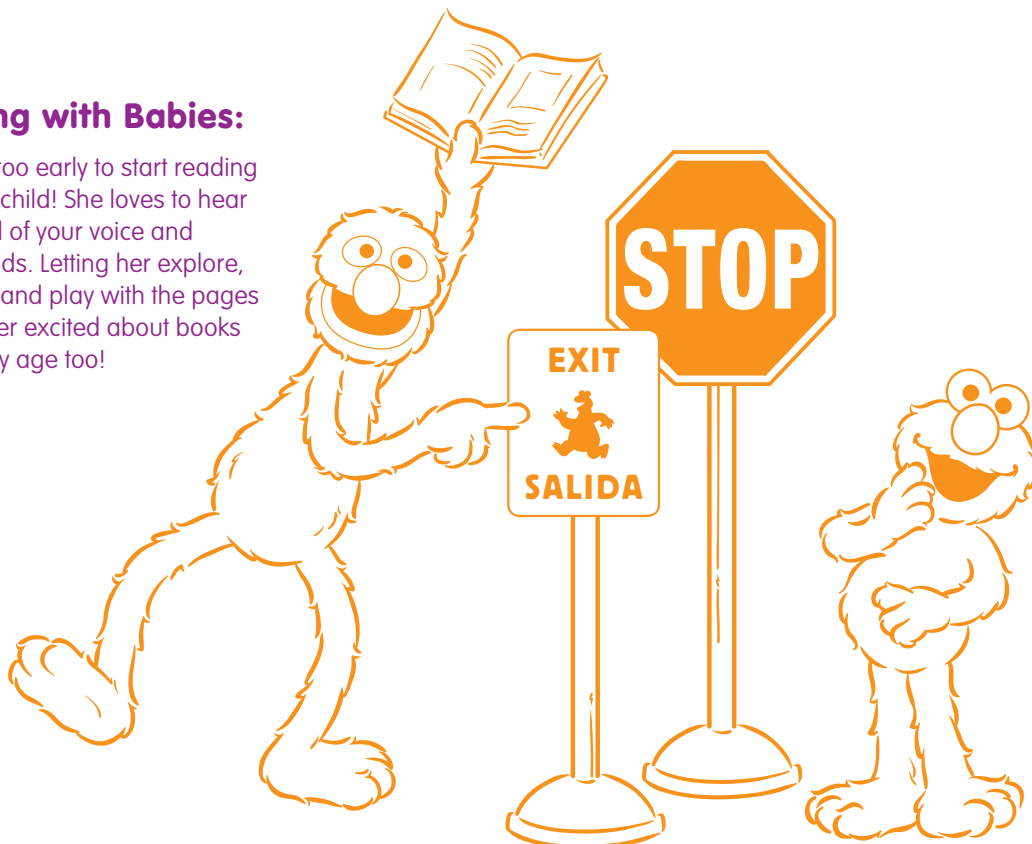
- » walk down the street
- » shop at the grocery store
- » drive along the street
- » eat at a restaurant
- » walk through the mall
- » go through a building

## you might read...

- » store names / traffic signs / letters
- » food labels / coupons / shopping list
- » traffic signs (e.g. stop signs) / street names / billboards
- » the menu as you order / receipt as you pay the bill
- » store names / sale banners / store directory
- » exit or enter signs / restroom signs / building directory

## Reading with Babies:

It's never too early to start reading with your child! She loves to hear the sound of your voice and new sounds. Letting her explore, chew on, and play with the pages can get her excited about books at an early age too!



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# Make the Most of Reading Books

There is so much your child can learn from reading a book. Here are some tips for before, during, and after you read a story.

## Introducing the Book:

**When you talk about the book before you read it, your child becomes more excited to hear the story!**

- » Look at the front cover together. Ask, "What do you think the book will be about?"

## While Reading:

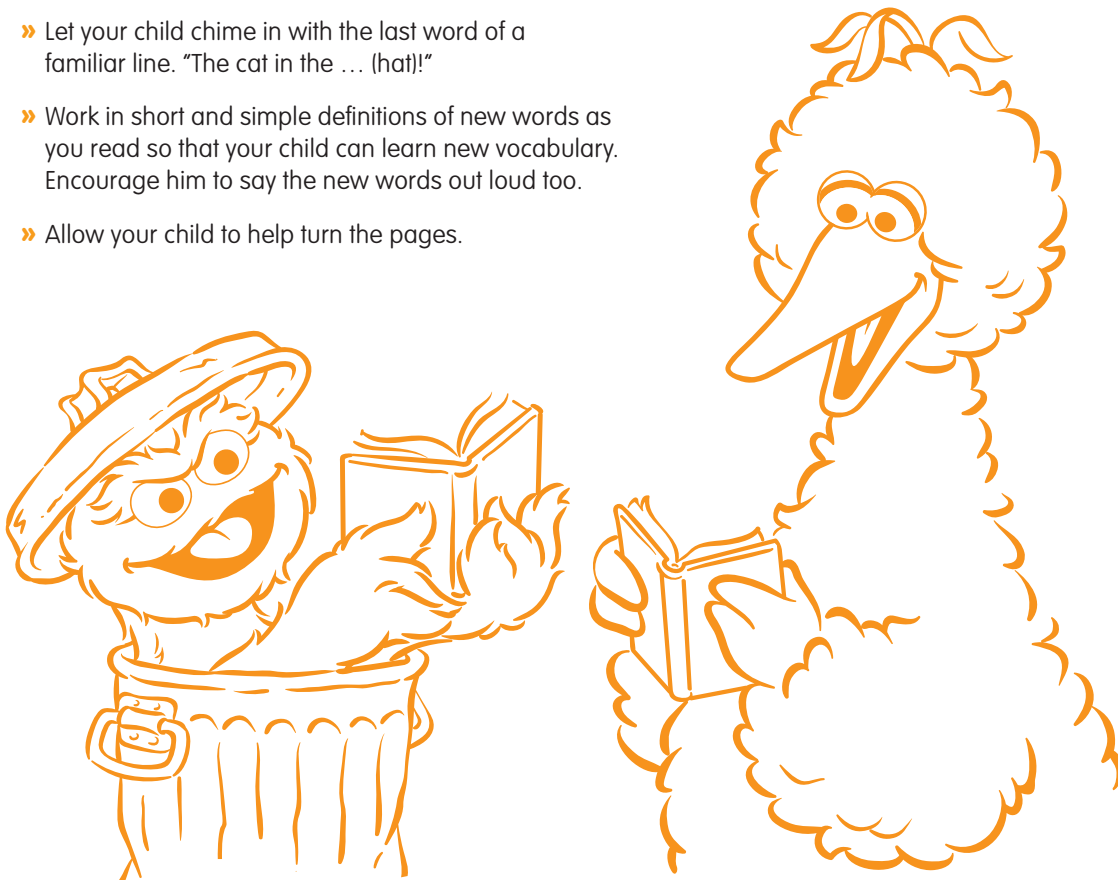
**Look for different opportunities to make the words and pictures exciting and come to life!**

- » Try to be expressive with your voice, feelings, and body movements.
- » You can also ask, "What is happening on this page?"
- » Let your child chime in with the last word of a familiar line. "The cat in the ... (hat)!"
- » Work in short and simple definitions of new words as you read so that your child can learn new vocabulary. Encourage him to say the new words out loud too.
- » Allow your child to help turn the pages.

## After Reading:

**Once you finish reading a book, it's the perfect time to talk about the story and let your child share what he remembers.**

- » Ask questions that encourage your child to think about why certain characters did something or felt a certain way. "Let's go back to this page where Peter looked mad. Why was he mad? What did he decide to do?"
- » Encourage your child to share his favorite parts of the story. He can either talk about them or act them out!
- » You might relate the story back to your child. Ask, "Have you ever felt the same way as the bunny? When?"



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## Getting to Know You!

Have fun getting to know Big Bird as you read this short letter together. You can read the words as your child “reads” the pictures.

Hi there! It’s me,  **Big Bird!** What’s your name?


The  **sun** is bright and warm here on Sesame Street today.

What is the weather like where you are?

Today I’m going to meet my best friend,  **Snuffy**, at the park.

We are going to play  **ball** and have a picnic.

What do you like to do with your friends?

When I get home, it will be time to get ready for  **bed**.

My grandma always reads me a  **book** before I go to sleep.

What’s your favorite book to read at bedtime?

I’m so  **happy** to have met you!



# Every Day is a Writing Day

Writing begins with scribbles and other marks. A simple mark on a paper carries so much meaning for a young child. To her, that one mark or scribble can represent a letter, a person, an animal, an idea, or a whole story! Using crayons and other writing tools also builds hand strength and coordination. Here are some ways you can encourage your child's love and appreciation for scribbling and writing:

## Everyday Writing Tips:

- » **Keep writing supplies on hand.** Have paper, markers, crayons, or pencils where your child can see and use them. Other fun materials include chalk, paint, and shaving cream.
- » **Explore letters and sounds.** Hang up a copy of the alphabet with pictures to help her remember what letters look and sound like as she writes.
- » **Talk together about scribbles.** After your child is done, look at what he has drawn or written and talk about what he sees in his marks.
- » **Be positive and encouraging.** Praise your child when she begins to scribble on a paper. When your child first begins writing, she may write letters and words backward, on two lines, or with parts missing or misspelled. This is normal and shows that she is trying to make sense of words while writing.

## Fun & Games:

- » **Pretend Play:** Make writing a part of your child's playtimes. He can imagine he is a doctor writing a prescription or a scientist keeping a journal of his observations.
- » **Let's Go Shopping:** Have fun planning a meal together. Together, write or draw a shopping list of the things you'll need to buy.
- » **My Writing Collection:** Young children are proud of their work. Give your child a large envelope or box to save her writing. You might also display her work on the refrigerator or a special wall.

## Writing with Babies:

Babies love to explore with their hands. Give them many opportunities to practice grabbing and holding toys with their hands and fingers. Over time, you can provide a chunky crayon or even finger paint to make marks on paper!



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## Writing Together On The Go

Wherever you go, take a few writing tools and a little notebook along so your child can draw, scribble, or write throughout the day. Help your child see that writing is an important part of everyday activities.

### As you...

- » run errands
- » go to the bank
- » play at the park
- » eat at a restaurant
- » wait in line

### encourage your child to...

- » help you create a to-do list and check off items.
- » watch you sign your name on a bank slip, then try to sign his own name on a piece of paper.
- » draw a picture of the things you see together.
- » pretend to be the waiter and make a list of the dishes you order.
- » say the first letter of his name and use the index finger to draw that letter in the air (while saying the letter out loud).



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# My Very Own Book

Together, make up a story. Then, encourage your child to draw and scribble pictures to tell the story in the pages below. Finally, cut out the squares and staple them to create your very own book. Have fun reading the book aloud and sharing the story with others too!



	<p><b>My Book About</b></p> <hr/>	
	<p><b>By:</b></p> <hr/>	
		
		

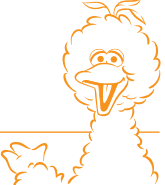




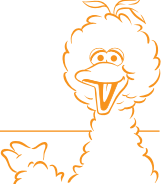




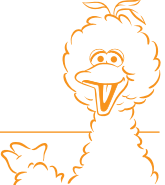

## Just for You!

Writing cards is a nice way to show people you care about them. Below are two cards your child can make to tell someone "I Love You" or "Thank You." Encourage her to use crayons or markers to decorate her cards with scribbles, pictures, and words.



# Around-the-House Labels

Create labels using words and pictures of objects around your house. Then cut them out and tape them to the matching objects. Point to and read them together throughout the day. Having lots of words around your house can make your child more interested in reading and writing!

<p>bed</p> 	<p>table</p> 
 <p>window</p> 	<p>refrigerator</p> 
	
	 
	

If you speak more than one language at home, you might create labels for words in multiple languages!

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# Silly Friends!

Let's have fun **talking**, **reading**, and **writing** about the picture below!



## Talk:

- » What is each of the Sesame Street friends doing?
- » What's funny about this picture?
- » What silly thing would you do if you were on Sesame Street?

## Read:

- » Read this poem aloud together while filling in the blanks:

**It's a silly day on Sesame Street!**

Zoe does a silly \_\_\_\_\_.

While Rosita strums on her \_\_\_\_\_.

A pigeon lands on Bert's \_\_\_\_\_.

While a spoon hangs right on Ernie's \_\_\_\_\_.

Spider tickles Elmo's \_\_\_\_\_.

While Abby balances a cap on Big Bird's \_\_\_\_\_!

## Write:

- » Now, grab a piece of paper and pencil, crayon, or marker! Make up a title, and write your own silly story about this picture using drawings and scribbles.

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# Talking, Reading, and Writing Milestones

This chart shows milestones from ages 2 to 5 and ways to nurture your child's language and literacy development. Keep in mind that your child develops at his own pace. Check with your child's teacher, doctor, or healthcare professional if you have concerns.

## Children ages 2 and 3 may...

- » Name familiar objects.
- » Like rhyming and playing with words.
- » Enjoy the same story again and again.
- » Complete a sentence or rhyme in familiar stories.
- » Recognize the first letter of their own name.
- » Start to mark and scribble on paper.

## Things to try...

- » Listen and respond lovingly to what they say.
- » Point to and name letters, words, and objects around you.
- » Make up fun songs using words and melodies.
- » Allow them to read the same book over and over.
- » Motivate them to draw or scribble and tell you about what they've drawn.

## Children ages 3 and 4 may...

- » Ask lots of questions.
- » Enjoy looking at books alone.
- » Remember and retell parts of stories.
- » Begin to copy letters.
- » Scribble with a purpose.

## Things to try...

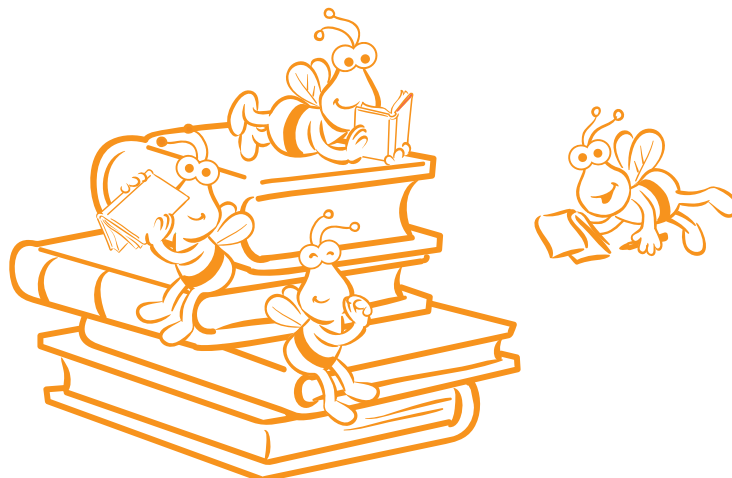
- » Keep writing supplies handy.
- » Explain new words in stories.
- » Play with rhyming words.
- » Write down the stories they tell about their drawings.
- » Begin visiting the library regularly.

## Children ages 4 and 5 may...

- » Enjoy asking about and using new words.
- » Repeat short rhymes and songs.
- » Recognize some words in print.
- » Draw pictures that tell stories.
- » Identify and print their own name.

## Things to try...

- » Label things with their names.
- » Encourage them to create their own stories.
- » Point out letters and words in signs.
- » Help them make picture and word books.
- » Get them their own library card.



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