



## **Preparing Your Child for Success in School**

By Linda Balsiger, M.S., CCC-SLP

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How do you know if your child will enter school with the skills necessary to learn to read and write? And can anything be done to help prepare them? The good news is, you don't have to wait until kindergarten or first grade. You can begin early by watching for normal developmental milestones, and engaging in activities to stimulate your child's interest in literacy related activities. If a child has any history of developmental delays, particularly speech-language delays, or there is a family history of learning disabilities, it is especially important to begin early.

The following lists the skills that typically emerge at various ages. Keep in mind that there is a broad range of "normal", and children may also lag behind if they have not been read to or given opportunities for scribbling and drawing.

### **"Pre-Reading" Behaviors by Age:**

#### 1 year

- Glances at or points to pictures of common items in a book when an adult names them.
- Makes vocalizations to "sing along" to familiar songs

#### 1-2 years

- Turns pages of a book (usually several at a time).
- Frequently points to pictures of common items in familiar books, especially when named by an adult
- Will sit and listen for brief periods while an adult reads from a picture book

#### 2-3 years

- Is aware that the writing in books has meaning
- Enjoys having a favorite book read repeatedly
- Names pictures of common items in books
- Likes books with rhymes and catchy phrases (e.g. Dr. Seuss)
- Begins to sit alone and leaf through books
- Turns pages one at a time
- Knows how to open a book and hold it right side up
- Knows which direction the print on a page goes
- Enjoys being read to for periods of 5-15 minutes

#### 3-4 years

- Recognizes familiar signs and logos (e.g. stop sign, restaurant logo)
- Can identify two words that rhyme or start with the same sound
- Participates in "reading" familiar books – may tell what happens next or fill in the end of a catchy repetitive phrase

#### By age 4:

- Is able to make up rhyming words (can be nonsense ones, like "Jelly pelly")
- Is aware that their parent is reading printed words on a page
- Can point out what a word on a page is by recognizing spaces or boundaries between words.
- Will pretend to read– holds a book, turns pages, and talks to self or tells the story



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By age 5:

- Says most speech sounds correctly (except perhaps *l, s, r, v, z, ch, sh, th*).
- Can “hear” the syllables in words – can clap or “tap out” the “beats” of a word
- Recites ABCs and numbers 1-10
- Knows letters have sounds, and may know the sounds for a few letters
- Can name the **sound** (not letter) that a spoken word starts with
- Recognizes some familiar letters on a printed page

### “Pre-Writing” Behaviors by Age:

1-2 years:

- Holds a crayon or large marker
- May begin to scribble or imitate another person writing

2-3 years:

- Scribbles wavy lines or tries to make circles

3-5 years

- May try to make letters/numbers when scribbling
- Can use a marker or crayon to copy simple shapes (lines, circles, etc)
- Realizes there is a difference between writing and drawing – and that writing has a function

By age 5:

- Begins to print large capital letters of the alphabet, and some numbers
- May try to write a word, with letters in no particular order
- Prints own name

5-6 years:

- Uses 1-3 letters to write words; spelling is invented and sound-based

### Activities to Prepare for Reading/Writing Success:

The following activities will help to stimulate your child’s interest, and develop the foundational skills needed for later reading and writing.

Age 0-3:

- Sing songs & recite nursery rhymes together
- Play rhyming games (like Patty Cake)
- Pick books with rhymes and catchy phrases (e.g. Dr. Seuss)
- Repeatedly read favorite books aloud



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- Focus attention on the pages of a book by pointing to words and pictures while reading
  - Give markers and paper and encourage scribbling
- Age 3-5:
- Make up rhyming words or think of words/object names that start with a certain sound
  - Search for pictures of words that start with a certain sound. Cut them out and make a collage for that letter/sound.
  - Put magnetic alphabet letters on the refrigerator for naming
  - Point out examples of print in daily life (e.g. signs, menus, cereal name)
  - Encourage child to pick out books at libraries and bookstores
  - Point to and run your finger under the words when reading books together
  - Read books with predictable patterns (such as “*Brown bear, brown bear what do you see?*”)
  - Talk about the stories you read in books afterwards
  - Provide daily opportunities to draw, scribble, or write
  - Point out times you are writing in daily life (e.g. grocery lists, paying bills).
  - Engage in activities to develop fine motor skills for writing: art, puzzles, stringing beads
  - Write your child’s name on their drawings – then point out the letters in their name

If you have concerns about any area of your child’s development, seek advice. The non-profit organization Healthy Beginnings offers free monthly developmental/health screenings for children 0-5 in Deschutes County (541-383-6357). They can determine whether your child should receive a more in-depth assessment by an early intervention team. In addition, a speech-language pathologist or learning specialist can be consulted if you have specific concerns about whether your child is at risk for a language-based learning disability (such as dyslexia).

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*Linda Balsiger, M.S., CCC-SLP is a literacy and learning specialist and certified state-licensed speech-language pathologist. She is the owner of Bend Language & Learning, a private practice dedicated to the treatment of dyslexia and other language-based learning disabilities ([www.bendlanguageandlearning.com](http://www.bendlanguageandlearning.com)).*

Information source: American Speech-Language Hearing Association ([www.asha.org](http://www.asha.org)).

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