



## More Than Just Storybooks: Promoting Emergent Literacy Skills in the Home

*A journal article summary by Nancy Rohr  
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The home is the first place where children experience literacy activities. Parents have the wonderful opportunity of fostering literacy even before their child formally enters school. For some parents, this may seem like pressure to turn every interaction into a learning experience; however, this need not be the case. Instead, catch “teachable moments,” those everyday spontaneous experiences when learning can take place in a relaxed and meaningful way. Parents don’t formally teach, but rather “scaffold” or assist their children in learning. Below are some suggestions for what this would look like in the home, or as you go about your daily activities.

**Dialogic reading.** This is more than simply reading a story, but engaging your child’s interest through open-ended questions. (e.g. “What do you think will happen next? What would you do if you were this girl/boy?”) As you dialogue with your child, repeat and elaborate on their answers while providing enthusiasm and encouragement.

**Print referencing.** As you read together, bring attention to the letters and words to increase a child’s awareness. Using both verbal (e.g. “Where should I begin reading? We know that’s letter...It’s a P!”) and nonverbal strategies (e.g. pointing to and tracking print when reading) helps to build an awareness for oral and written language.

**Joint Writing Activities.** Encourage your child to write out their grocery list while you are writing yours. It may be only scribbles at first, but they are getting the idea that letters and words have meaning.

**Environmental Print Activities.** Children tend to look more at the colors, logos and pictures in which the print is embedded, rather than at the print itself. In order to foster awareness, the parent should explicitly call attention to the print during spontaneous interactions. (e.g. When shopping for laundry detergent note, “We use Tide, which begins with a T. Can you help me find the box that begins with a T... This box says, T-I-D-E. You’re right! It’s Tide!”)

**Literacy Play-based Settings.** Including print materials in play settings provides meaningful opportunities for children to explore and interact with print. Children can create a pet shop, or grocery store out of materials you have available at home. Helping your child create signs, logos, and price tags brings literacy into their play.

**Phonological Awareness Activities.** Children love to sing and repeat rhymes! Singing songs such “Old McDonald Had a Farm” and “Bingo” is fun and helps a child develop awareness for the different sounds that make up language and words. No special materials are required; it is just about having fun!

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### Reference

Neumann, M. M., & Neumann, D. L. (2009). More than just storybooks: Promoting emergent literacy skills in the home [Electronic Version]. *Childhood Education*, 85(4), 257-259