

Early Years Library

SERIES INTRODUCTION: LANGUAGE AND EARLY LITERACY

Language and early literacy skills help children understand others and express themselves through reading and writing. Language and early literacy skills can be supported by children's regular engagement in, and enjoyment of, shared reading, mark making, social conversation and language-rich play.

Early childhood education plays an important role in embedding these early literacy skills into children's environments and daily routines. Meaningful and contextualised activities intended to develop literacy skills show children that the written word has significance and keeps them engaged and excited.

Young children develop an understanding that reading and writing are ways to communicate and make meaning. As children progress on their journey towards reading and writing, they begin to identify sounds and letters, write part or all of their name or read simple words. Later, more advanced reading and writing skills allow children to express themselves in interesting ways and to understand and communicate information across subjects in school.

Children may develop these skills in different orders or at a different pace to others. Practitioners can use their knowledge of each child, their setting and the wider community to tailor their practice.

The Early Years Library contains four language and early literacy booklets, each covering a core language and early literacy skill and key practices that can be used to support skill development. The table on the next page presents the four booklets.

If you want to support:	Focus on:
Language and listening	Learning new words
	Using new words in context
	Listening and responding
	Remembering stories
	Answering questions about a story
Phonological awareness	Identifying a word's first and last sounds
	Recognising rhyming sounds by listening
	Producing rhyming sounds and words
	Syllable awareness
	Oral segmenting (from words to sounds)
	Oral blending (from sounds to words)
Print and letter knowledge	Identifying letters of the alphabet
	Identifying lower case and upper case letters
	Understanding that print conveys meaning
	Understanding print as a system
Early writing	Mark making for meaning
	Forming letters
	Writing your name

For more information on the Early Years Library and to download the booklets, visit www.EIF.org.uk/EarlyYearsLibrary

How can I use these booklets?

The booklets can be used very flexibly and for different purposes:

- During new staff induction, to help new staff understand why they focus on certain skills and activities.
- When planning activities for the children based on your understanding of their interests, needs and the curriculum in your setting. Practices and strategies can be adapted to your context, to children's age, and to your daily schedule.
- Throughout the day to get inspiring ideas for extending activities, responding to children and planning in the moment.

As a practitioner, you might find that you are already using many of these strategies and practices. This can give you the confidence that the work you are doing to support the children in your care is underpinned by evidence.

Commonly used strategies

Evidence-based programmes recommend a range of strategies for practitioners. Throughout the Early Years Library, you will notice that some of these strategies are used more frequently to support some skills, while other strategies are used more frequently to support other skills. For instance, visual tools such as posters and printed materials are frequently used to help children identify a word's first and last sounds, while open-ended questions are frequently used to support children use new words in context. Using a range of strategies is most likely to support young children's development. At times, as a practitioner you will also step back and let children experience challenge and joy in their learning without getting involved.

Strategies to support early numeracy skills include:

- Didactic instruction and teacher modelling
- Discussion, questions and answers
- Visual displays, objects and materials
- Books, songs and nursery rhymes
- Games, role-play and child modelling
- Repeating sounds, syllables or words
- Drawing and writing
- Art and creative projects
- Strategy practice and physical learning
- Timetabled routines

Inspiring ideas

To support each of the skills, the Early Years Library offers inspiring ideas based on typical activities in evidence-based programmes. There are a range of activities suitable for individual, small group, and whole group activities. Some of the inspiring ideas are appropriate for in-the-moment interactions with children, while others require more planning. They are meant to inspire your practice, not dictate it. You can use the inspiring ideas to reflect on your practice, discuss ideas with colleagues and plan how to respond to children's interests and needs in relation to your curriculum.





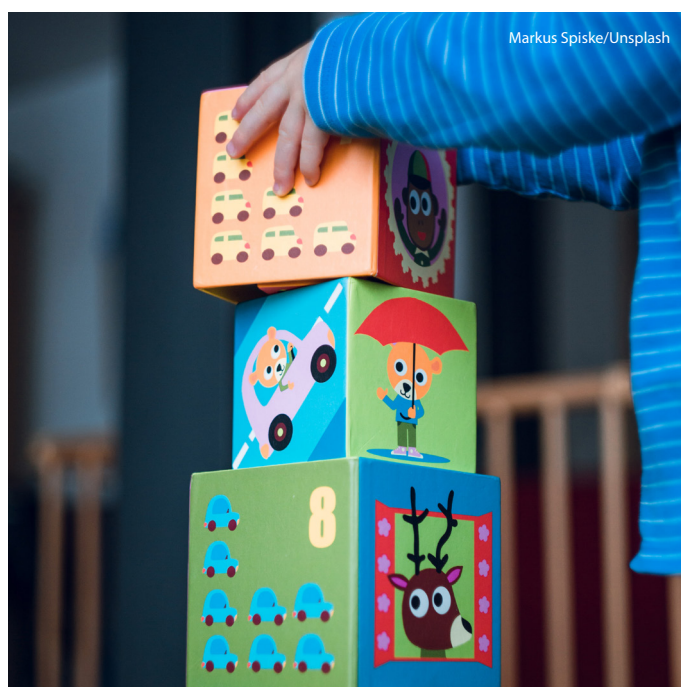
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Unique individuals

Research shows that each child develops in a unique way, rather than following a strictly linear pre-defined route through development in a specific order or timeframe. For this reason, the Early Years Library is not presented in chronological order by age. Practitioners can use their professional judgement to gauge which skills a child may benefit from focusing on at different times.

Inter-connected areas of development

While the booklets are presented separately, research shows that all areas of development are inter-connected. Supporting children's language and early literacy skills will call on social and emotional skills; social and emotional skills will support early numeracy skills, and so on. The Early Years Library is designed to be flexible, allowing you to combine practices from across the booklets and return to the booklets in different ways at different times.



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Role of the adult in supporting child development

Early childhood education can help children build strong foundation skills in language and early literacy skills. When children have plenty of opportunities to explore and practise language and early literacy skills, they can apply the skills they learn to new problems and activities in their everyday life.

Practitioners can support children to develop these skills in a range of ways, for example by establishing routines, introducing strategies and physical learning, or modelling language use. Striking a balance between child-led and adult-guided experiences helps children develop their love of learning while also supporting and extending their learning. The Early Years Library highlights specific effective practices from evidence-based programmes that you can weave into your existing approaches.

Are you using the Early Years Library?

We'd love to hear from you. Scan the code or visit bit.ly/contact-eyl

