

Early and Emergent Literacy

birth to 2 years

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The ability to read and write begins at birth and depends on a progression of abilities in three basic areas of development—hearing, vision and muscle development. By recognizing the direct link between early child development and literacy, we can nurture growth and competence in children’s ability to read and write.

Age	Hearing	Vision	Muscle Development
0-6 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By 1 month, connects sound with source. • Listens to parent/caregiver’s voice. • Makes cooing or gurgle sounds. • Imitates sounds heard. • Responds to music. • Brightens to sound, especially voices. • 3 and 4 months, new sounds like /p/. • Understands some words (bye-bye). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Birth to 3 months, responds well to high contrast/black & white. • At 2 months, can tell the difference between primary colours. • Can follow moving objects with eyes. • Starts to search for objects. • Begins to link sight and sound. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lifts head while lying on front. • Reaches out for objects. • Can hold an object and will lift it up to suck it. At first, babies can hold objects, but are unable to let go. • Explores books by putting them in the mouth. • Responds to tickle rhymes.
6-12 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • /m/ /p/ /b/ /w/ sounds are emerging. • Plays with language sounds. • Smiles at happy voice. • Cries or looks unhappy at angry voice. • Points and makes sounds (looks for mother). • Knows from 1 to 50 words. • Uses one word sentences. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discriminates faces and responds well to photographs of babies. • Begins to create categories of objects (e.g. groups toy cars together). • Responds to games like Peek-a-boo. • Notices familiar and unfamiliar surroundings. • Can learn meaning of gestures (sign language). • Attention span increases greatly around 9 months, will attend to details in books. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses body to tell what they want • Starts trying to crawl; some learn to walk without ever crawling. • Pulls herself upright and stands, holding onto the furniture. • Passes things from hand to hand. • Learns to let go of things, e.g. drops something or gives it to you. • Feeds herself “finger foods.” • Enjoys touch and feel books. • Moves body to music and responds to bouncing rhymes.

<p style="text-align: center;">12-18 months</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Begins to use words including some sounds to identify objects. • Others can understand about half of what the child says. • Rapidly learns to understand new words. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses objects as she sees adult using them. • Points at pictures in books (e.g. “Show me the puppy.”). • Begins to learn conventions of print (i.e. pages are flipped from left to right, how a book is held). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Walks alone. • Goes up and down stairs. • Removes loose clothing (e.g. socks). • Begins to build with blocks. • Rolls a ball. • Uses more complex gestures to communicate. • Responds to action rhymes. • Begins to feed herself with a spoon. • Turns pages of a book one at a time. • Enjoys eye-hand coordination toys.
<p style="text-align: center;">18 months - 2 years</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • /n/ /t/ /d/ /s/ sounds are emerging. • Recites parts of well-known stories, songs or rhymes. • Names familiar pictures. • Can follow directions. • Knows at least 50 words. • Puts two words together. • Others can understand more of what she says. • Asks for favourite books to be read repeatedly. • “Reads” to dolls or stuffed animals. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Matches colours. • Begins to understand symbols – treats objects as if they were something else – (e.g. drinks water but calls it tea). • Recognizes symbols in books – knows that a cat in a book represents a cat in the real world. • Recognizes one or two letters (usually the first letter in own name or a familiar sign). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Throws a ball. • Enjoys actions songs. • Enjoys scribbling with a crayon. • Enjoys play dough, finger paint.

Questions on next page, based on this chart.

1. You are visiting a home daycare to see if you would like to place your 18-month-old child there. The woman who runs it says that she doesn't allow the toddlers to feed themselves because they make too much of a mess. For the same reason, she doesn't give them play dough, crayons, finger paint or markers. Do you agree with her? _____

2. What's the connection between using a spoon, playing with play dough and learning to write? _____

3. Tomorrow you will begin babysitting a four-month-old baby in your home. What signs will you look for to check that he can hear you normally? _____

4. Why do you think that hearing and sound imitation are important in learning to read later on? _____

5. The chart says that babies between 6 and 12 months old will use one-word sentences. Give an example of a one-word sentence a baby might say. _____. How will children of that age 'use their bodies to tell what they want'? _____

6. The chart shows that a child's imagination begins to blossom between the ages of 18 months and 2 years. What examples does the chart give? _____

7. Your instructor will pair you with someone in the group who has not read this chart. Find out the age of his or her child, then describe what the chart says about this age group.