

Growing and Learning Instructors' Guide

These activities focus on the different stages of development that a child passes through, from birth until the time they start school. Participants learn what to expect at each stage and how to create a rich learning environment in the home. They practise reading text and charts, and they complete a desktop publishing project. They take home many ideas for activities to try with their children.

Central Idea

At every stage of life children are learning new skills and knowledge from their experiences. Parents and caregivers can do a lot to make those experiences rich and positive.

Warm-up, Bookmarks

Warm up: Copy the **Learning Bookmarks** onto card stock. Make duplicates if necessary so that each person gets a bookmark. Cut them apart and hand them out. Ask the group to pair off and discuss the quotes on their bookmarks. After a few minutes, ask the group to share a bit of what they've been talking about. Next, ask for volunteers to give some examples from their own experiences to illustrate these sayings. Provide markers and coloured pencils so that anyone who wants to can decorate their bookmark with borders and designs.

As Your Child Learns

selected pages

Go to The Centre for Expertise in Family Literacy web site. Look in the Resources section for the booklet **As Your Child Learns**. Print pages 2-5, 6-9, 11-13, 17-19, 22-24 and 28. Make copies for your group. (This is a companion booklet for the one you used in the theme unit Literacy at Home.) Give participants time to read their handouts, or read them out loud to the group for the benefit of those with weak reading skills. Take time to explain any unknown words or concepts. Get participants to talk about their own children. Ask why parents are encouraged to:

- Hold and touch their babies often?
- Talk a lot to their children and answer all their many, many questions?
- Play games with their toddlers?
- Let older children help with chores?

**Development
Quiz**

As a follow-up to the previous activity, give out the **Development Quiz**. It can be used as a written or an oral exercise.

Milestones

Copy the handout **Milestones** back-to-back on one sheet of paper. Read through the complete chart with the group, then ask them to turn the paper over and fill in the ages on the second chart. Remind them that these milestones may not show up at the same age in all children. Some develop more quickly, some more slowly. In most cases, this is nothing to worry about. But if a parent or caregiver is concerned, they should speak to a professional, like a nurse, doctor, teacher or early childhood educator.

**Sorting Toys:
Drag and Drop**

Every moment of a child's day is spent learning and they do most of their learning through play. You could say playing is their job. Reassure parents that toys don't have to be new, complicated, electronic or expensive to be educational and fun. Many good toys can be found at second-hand stores and garage sales; just make sure they are clean and in good condition. If possible, bring in a collection of toys to discuss. Talk about the skills that children are learning as they play with them. (Don't forget problem solving, social skills and fine motor skills.) Follow this up with the exercise outlined on the page **Sorting Toys: Drag and Drop**. It gives practice in organizing computer files into folders by using the drag-and-drop mouse action. You will need to prepare this beforehand:

1. Create five folders and label them with the age categories.
2. Create 15 word processor files and label them with the names of toys. (They can be blank inside.)
3. Copy the folders and files onto the participants' computer desktops.
4. If necessary, demonstrate how to drag-and-drop a file into the appropriate folder.

There may be some variation in how the toys are sorted. Afterward, invite everyone to discuss their decisions.

Early and Emergent Literacy, birth to 2 years

This activity is for the strong readers in your group. Give them the handout **Early and Emergent Literacy, birth to 2 years**. The questions that follow the chart could be given as a written exercise or they could be discussed in a small group. The last question asks readers to pair up with someone who has not read the chart and to explain part of it to them. This is a way of making the information accessible to those with weaker skills.

Family Reunion

Brainstorm lots of games and activities for children of different ages. Write all the ideas on a flip chart. (Don't forget music and dancing.) Ask participants to describe any that are not familiar to everyone. If you feel that your group may not know of many games and activities, you could bring in a few resource books or magazines, or research ideas on the Internet. The web site of The Centre for Expertise in Family Literacy is one such source. Next, ask participants to imagine that they will be attending a huge family reunion where there will be children of all ages. They have been put in charge of organizing the children's games and activities! From the list on the flip chart, and others they come up with, they record their plan on the worksheet **Family Reunion**. This could be done in pairs or groups of three. They can expect about six children in each age group.

Make a Booklet with Microsoft Publisher

The instruction sheet **Make a Booklet with Microsoft Publisher** explains how to set up a booklet template. (If your version of Publisher is different, you may need to adapt the instructions.) Participants can follow them to create their own personalized memory booklets about their children's growth and development. Give the instructions directly to anyone who is computer savvy enough to follow them easily. For anyone else, you will need to make the template and provide them with a computer copy. You could also print out paper copies to introduce the activity. Some people might like to plan their work on paper copies before moving to the computer. Ideas are provided for what to write on each page—they can be erased before the final products are printed. When the final version is printed it may seem as if the page order is all jumbled, but don't despair! You will soon see that this order allows pages to be photocopied back-to-back to produce a logical order. If you don't have a long-arm stapler available, the booklets could be bound using large needles and heavy thread.

Make a fold up book

After making their booklet, participants may enjoy making a simpler one with their children. Print out the instruction sheet from www.familyliteracyexpertise.org, (Resources and Materials > Early Literacy Handouts for Parents > September > **Make a fold up book**). Ask participants to take it home and help their children create a book.

Public Speaking

Public speaking is something that most people try to avoid. The idea of having to give a speech might cause anxiety to many of your participants so give people the option of passing on this one. But anyone who would like to practise preparing and delivering a short speech should be encouraged to do so. The handout **Public Speaking** gives a few tips. Give them several days to prepare and practise and then decide when they will speak. Their speeches shouldn't be more than about three minutes long each. They can choose their own topics or you could give ideas such as:

- Parents are their children's first and most important teachers
- Play is an important part of a child's education
- There are many different ways to be smart (street smart, money wise, etc.)

Remind the audience that their role is to be respectful and attentive so they can ask questions at the end of each speech.

Browse a web site

Go to the website of The Centre for Expertise in Family Literacy and browse through the Resources and Materials section. Here you will find a variety of activities, poems and songs for parents to enjoy with their children. Print a selection you think would interest your group and pass them around for all to see. Let each person choose a few to take home.

To do at home

Parents and children can enjoy watching the development of a plant from seed to maturity. Give each participant a few large **dried** beans to take home. Show how to set the beans up in a clear plastic cup or glass, held in place with a damp paper towel. There should always be a little water in the bottom so that the paper towel doesn't dry out.

