

Playing with Language Instructors' Guide

Most of the activities in this section are based on the book *Family Literacy Today* by Deborah Nesbitt-Munroe and Susan Barry, available from www.kingstonliteracy.com (>For Sale). You will find many more ideas at www.familyliteracyexpertise.org (Resources/Materials). There are several things to make here so you might want to divide the tasks among the group and have each person make duplicates to share.

Central Idea

Play is an important part of a child's development. Through play, children discover new sounds, learn new skills and improve the skills they already have. Parents and caregivers help children to develop valuable life skills by encouraging them to have fun with language.

Warm-up

Play the game Unfortunately—Fortunately. Someone starts with a made-up sentence and each player in turn ad libs the next line. For example:

1st person: *Yesterday Patti went to the beach.*

2nd person: *Unfortunately it started to rain.*

3rd person: *Fortunately it was raining twoonies.*

4th person: *Unfortunately they hurt when they rained down on Patti's head.*

5th person: ??

The game goes on for as long as you want it to. Afterwards, talk about how games like this encourage a child's imagination to develop. There are endless numbers of language games out there for parents and children to enjoy together. Ask for a few examples from the group.

Making a Flap Book for Your Child

Show a children's book with a predictable line such as *Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?* As you are reading ask the group to predict what will come next. Say that when you are reading with children you can ask questions like, "What is going to happen next?" and "What is the next word?" Explain that prediction is an important reading strategy that helps us to understand what we read. We use prediction to figure out

unknown words and to make sense of what we read. If we find we have predicted correctly, it encourages us to keep reading. Parents should not be concerned that their child is 'just guessing,' they should encourage prediction. Show another book, perhaps one with more words, and talk about how it could be used to practise prediction. One of the group might like to demonstrate. Finally, give the handout **Making a Flap Book for Your Child** with the necessary materials and spend some time creating.

Teaching Tips for Word Attack

Read through the handout **Teaching Tips for Word Attack** to yourself before the class. Choose some adult reading material to introduce each tip. Also bring several children's books to illustrate how you would use each tip to help a child read difficult words. Go through each tip with the group, showing it in both an adult and a child context. Then ask participants to choose a few of the children's books and work in pairs to practise using these word attack strategies.

Letter Bingo

The **Letter Bingo** game can be adapted in many ways. For example, instead of calling a letter, call a word and ask players to find the letter the word begins with. How many play variations can the group think of?

Rhyming Concentration

Remind the group that recognizing rhyming words and playing rhyming games is an important step in a child's language development. It will help him to hear patterns in language and later to spell. Brainstorm lots of rhyming words on a flip chart. Point out that rhyming words do not always follow the same spelling pattern, like 'sun' and 'done'. Likewise, words that have the same spelling pattern do not always rhyme, like 'foot' and 'boot'. Use these words to make a rhyming game to take home. Give the handout **Rhyming Concentration**, with materials.

Compound Word Fun

Compound Word Fun gives directions for making a simple matching game. Introduce the activity by writing some common, two-part compound words on the flip chart. Ask for suggestions of other compound words. They should all be examples that can be broken apart to form two complete words, like 'lunch/box' but not 'tele/phone'. Remind them that looking for smaller words in a large word is an excellent strategy for reading unknown words.

The Writing Process

Sometimes the most difficult part of writing is deciding what to write about. The handout **The Writing Process** shows how important those first steps are—the planning and pre-writing. Go through the sheet together and ask participants to share some information about the kinds of writing activities their children are doing. Now tell the group that they will be given a tool to help them get started on a short writing task. They can also use this technique to help their own school-age children to organize ideas for writing projects. Give out **The Web** and a choice of three or four topics (e.g. learning, hope, friends, Sundays). Have participants work in pairs to gather ideas and create their webs. You could ask them to finish the writing at home.

The Web**In a Paper Bag**

In a Paper Bag is a fun activity to generate ideas for writing. It could also be used for story telling—one person reaches into the bag for a picture and begins the story, then picks another picture and works that into the story. After a few pictures they can pass the bag to the next person. (Whoever wants to should be allowed to pass!)

The Beat Goes On

Read the information sheet **The Beat Goes On** and talk about the role that music plays in a child's learning. The handout **Homemade Music** gives instructions for making several instruments so you will need to be prepared with materials. When the group has made a collection of instruments, have some fun trying them out together. Be sure to discuss which instruments might be dangerous for smaller children. Then take them into the childcare room and let the children experiment.

Homemade Music**Early and Emergent Literacy, 2 to 7 years**

The chart **Early and Emergent Literacy, 2 to 7 years** is the second half of the one used in *Growing and Learning*. As before, pair participants so that strong readers can explain the relevant information to others who would find the format intimidating.