

Building Literacy into Everyday Activities

Literacy is used during day-to-day activities to help adults and children “get things done”... like drawing or writing to communicate; keeping records; making lists; reading and following directions, on prescription bottles and instructions, doing math at the grocery store, and sharing stories and messages through conversation. Family literacy is family learning and involves everyone in your family. Everyday activities are a great way to learn. It doesn't take a lot of time and the payoffs are big. Family literacy is as important as anything else you do in your life.

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Get cooking!

Make daily tasks a time for learning. Planning a menu or grocery list with your child is family literacy. Turn everyday chores into family learning...and get things done!

- Read a cereal box or milk carton at breakfast.
- Clip coupons. Talk about how much a coupon saves.
- Use a newspaper or thermometer to check the weather ... Figure out what to wear today.
- Calculate how many gallons of gas your car needs and how much it will cost to fill it up.
- Use laundry time for math and science activities like measuring detergent and folding towels into equal halves, thirds or fourths.
- Write notes to put in backpacks and pockets. A kind word or funny joke lets children know you care.
- Compare food labels in the grocery store. Whose favorite item has the most nutrition?...the least fat?...the most salt?

That's entertainment!

Use your imagination. Jazz up family time...You might find hidden talents!

- Make your own musical instrument out of things around the house (rubber bands, cardboard, glasses, spoons ...)



- Draw what you did today.
- Create a family talent show, skit or play.
- Watch a movie and talk about it. Be your own movie critic and develop a family rating system.
- Sing a good morning song.
- Plan a family outing to a zoo, concert or museum. Check local newspapers or magazines for ideas.
- Read about your favorite animals or artists at the local library or the internet.
- Use a fun book to set the stage for a family meal. When was the last time you had green eggs and ham for dinner or made Mickey Mouse pancakes?



Make a game of it!

Family literacy should be fun. Games are everywhere! Try something new for the whole family so everybody learns.

- Plan a fantasy vacation. Look at maps, travel books and magazines.
- Follow your favorite sport. Look up your team's scores in the newspaper. Turn down the sound on the TV and try your own "play-by-play."
- Bring out the old favorites. Play cards, board games, 20 questions, or hang-man. Make up a jump-rope game or draw a hopscotch board.
- Make your own crossword puzzles, word searches, and word jumbles.
- Take a walk around the neighborhood. Read the street signs, and make a map when you get home.
- Play bank, store or restaurant using bank deposit slips, coupons, or empty food containers. Children learn that all careers use reading and writing.

Talk it up!

Keep the conversations going. Focus on positive comments. Talking about things other than the "here and now" helps children's brains grow.

- Read the TV guide and plan a schedule together. Talk about what you like and don't like about a program.
- Make a family scrapbook, photo album or memory box. Tell stories about your family history and how they came to Tennessee.
- Tell a story about your day over dinner. What is the best thing that happened today?...the funniest?
- Read a story together as a family and take turns reading sections.

- Talk frequently with your child's teacher about school goals and activities, and your child's progress.
- Work with your child to set goals for academic, social and emotional
- Talk with your children about their activities and friends. Parent involvement helps keep children in school and off drugs.

Don't forget the basics!

Family literacy is not just about kids but about adults too!



- Get a good night's sleep and be ready for school, work, and family life.
- Let children see you reading. You are their model.
- Get a library card for every member of the family and use it! Libraries have lots of fun family programs.
- Read many different things—catalogs, menus, signs and other everyday items.
- Keep a variety of writing materials around the house – markers, pens, pencils, old greeting cards, envelopes and note pads. It's okay for you and your children to use a computer or typewriter to write.
- Give books as presents so books become special and pleasurable.
- Spend time with each child every day. Do things together and talk about them: shopping, walks, zoos, museums, preparing meals, concerts, worship services, library, sports, and hobbies.
- Listen to your children so that you learn about their lives and show that you are interested in them.
- Display children's work in a prominent place to make them feel good about themselves.
- Show children you value their efforts and that what they do is important. Tell your kids that they have done a good job and you may hear the same from them someday

Taken from Literacy Resource Kit for Parents: Families Helping children Become Better Readers, Tennessee State Improvement Grant which was adapted with permission from Connecticut Family Literacy Initiative

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