Interesting Facts and Tips

These suggestions are for your use when creating a mini poster/card for display or as filler on a take-home sheet. Copy them directly or rewrite them using your own words. Find more facts and tips to share with your community in the multiple sources listed in the text and from the newest early literacy information being published today.

General

• Children who are exposed to books early in life have better language skills than those who wait until later.
• Children who are read to three times per week or more do much better in later development than children who are read to less than three times per week.
• Your child does not need worksheets or flash cards to learn to read, but the more time you spend reading and playing sound games with your child will help him or her to learn reading skills.
• Let your child see you reading and writing or find interesting articles in the newspaper to share with him or her.
• Children develop much of their capacity for learning in the first three years of life, when their brains grow to 90 percent of their eventual adult weight.
• Promoting literacy does not mean creating a school-like setting in your home but, rather, taking advantage of the opportunities in your everyday life.
• The development of early literacy skills through early experiences with books and stories is critically linked to a child’s success in learning to read.
• Development of literacy is a continuous process that begins at birth and depends heavily on environmental influences.
• Reading to children also impacts their emotional and social development, as they share stories with those they care for. Because brain development and early literacy follow the “use it or lose it” principle, exposure to reading should occur early and often.
• Have books in many different places in your home to show your child that reading is important.
• Keep books down low where your child can see and reach them. Encourage your child to read or pretend to read.
• Introduce yourself and your child to your librarian. Librarians can help you to select the best books that are both fun and suitable for your child’s age level. They can also show you the other programs and services the library has to offer.
• In addition to a wealth of books, your library has tapes and CDs of books, musical CDs and tapes, movies, computers that you can use, and many more resources. You also might find books in languages other than English or programs to help adults improve their reading. If you would like reading help for yourself or your family, check with the librarian about literacy programs in your community.
• Reading to a child for thirty minutes per day from infancy helps prepare a child to learn. A five-year-old who has not been read to daily will enter kindergarten with far fewer hours of “literacy nutrition” than a child who has been read to daily from infancy. No teacher, no matter how talented, can make up for those lost hours.
• You are the key to your child’s success in learning to read. When you read, talk, or play with your child, you’re stimulating the growth of your child’s brain and building the connections that will become the building blocks for reading. Brain development research shows that reading aloud to your child every day increases your child’s brain’s capacity for language and literacy skills and is the most important thing you can do to prepare him or her for learning to read.
Interesting Facts and Tips

**Reading**

- Reading books to children is a great way to build their vocabulary. Typically, books include a more diverse vocabulary than what we use in everyday conversation.
- Ask your child about the book you are reading together, instead of just having the child listen to you reading the story. This will help your child develop reading comprehension.
- How we read to children is as important as how frequently we read to them. Children learn most from books when they are actively involved. Ask your child lots of questions, pause to let him or her answer each question or finish talking, and then expand on his or her answer.
- Read for just a short time, many times a day. Make books part of your child’s everyday life by having them available for his or her use.
- Read to your baby every day. You do not need to read the words; you can just point to the pictures and tell your baby what you see.
- Continue reading with enthusiasm even if your child walks away; he or she will still benefit from hearing the rich language.
- Share a book with your child every day. Make book sharing a positive experience. Share books when you and your child are in a good mood.
- When you are reading a book with your child, do not worry about whether you get to finish the book. If your child loses interest, just continue another time. By following your child’s lead, you can make book sharing a positive experience.
- Read a variety of books with your child, both fiction and nonfiction.
- Reading aloud to children is the single most important activity for developing their literacy skills, according to a 1985 study by the National Commission on Reading.
- Before you start reading a book with your child, introduce the book. Read the title and the author’s and illustrator’s names. Look at the cover. Talk about what the book might be about. Suggest things to look and listen for. This will help your child develop essential early literacy skills.
- Make reading a part of every day. You can read at bedtime, after lunch, on the bus, or just take a story break.
- Have fun! Children who love books learn to read. Books can be part of special time with your child.
- Talk about the pictures. You do not have to read the book to tell a story.
- When you share books that include a repetitive or predictable phrase, pause and wait so your child can say the word that ends this phrase. This will help your child develop narrative skills.
- Read from a variety of children’s books, including fairy tales, song books, poems, and information books.

**Singing**

- Singing songs and rhymes with your child is a great way to help him or her develop phonological awareness. Libraries have CDs and books with rhymes that you can check out.
- Begin talking and singing to your baby from birth. Your baby loves hearing your voice.
- Do fingerplays and songs like “The Eency Weency Spider” and “Where Is Thumbkin?” with your child. Libraries have books and CDs of fingerplays that you can check out. Sharing them with your child helps him or her develop phonological awareness.
- Simply singing with a child helps to connect neural pathways and increases the child’s ability to retain information; in other words, it builds memory.
- Children and adults have favorite songs. Repeating these same songs gives children security and memories that can be called on to comfort for a lifetime.
- Songs naturally divide words into syllables and sounds, so they are internalized. The built-in repetition and rhyme increase understanding and retention.
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Talking

• Pointing out print around you will help your child develop the print awareness, an essential early literacy skill. You can point out the signs in the library, at the grocery store, and while driving.
• Point out familiar pictures and name them; that’s how your child’s vocabulary grows.
• If you are more fluent in a language other than English, research shows that it is best for you to speak to your child in the language you know best.
• When you share books with the sounds of animals and other things, you help children develop their phonological awareness, an essential early literacy skill.
• Let your child ask questions about the story. Use the story as an opportunity to engage in conversation and to talk about familiar activities and objects.
• When you engage your child in conversation, you are helping him or her develop essential early literacy skills.

Writing

• Have your child be an author and illustrator. Encourage your child to make up his or her own story, dictate it to you, and draw the pictures to go with it.
• Follow up on the story. Invite your child to talk about, draw, paint, or pretend to be one of the characters in the story.
• The first letter of a child’s first name is very important to him or her and is often the first letter the child will recognize. Make sure the writing surface is big because young children are still working on their fine-motor skills, and they use full arm movements when writing.
• To help your child develop letter knowledge, let him or her make letter shapes out of playdough or dim the lights and let him or her trace letter shapes on the wall with a flashlight.

Playing

• You can help your child get ready to read by cooking with him or her. The library has cookbooks for children. You can show your child how to read a recipe and read the labels on the ingredients together.
• Follow up on the story. Invite your child to talk about, draw, paint, or pretend to be one of the characters in the story.
• To help your child develop letter knowledge, let him or her make letter shapes out of playdough or dim the lights and let him or her trace letter shapes on the wall with a flashlight.

Quotes to Remember

“Although many experiences are said to contribute to early literacy, no other single activity is regarded as important as the shared book experience between caregivers and children.”

—Susan B. Neuman, “Books Make a Difference: A Study of Access to Literacy” (Reading Research Quarterly 34, no. 3 [July–September 1999]: 286–311)

“The single most significant factor influencing a child’s early educational success is an introduction to books and being read to at home prior to beginning school.”

—Richard C. Anderson and others, Becoming a Nation of Readers: The Report of the Commission on Reading (Center for the Study on Reading, 1985)

“The relationship between the skills with which children enter a school and their later academic performance is strikingly stable. For instance, research has shown that there is nearly a 90% probability that a child will remain a poor reader at the end of the fourth grade if the child is a poor reader at the end of the first grade. Further, knowledge of alphabet letters at entry into kindergarten is a strong predictor of reading ability in 10th grade.”


“Children who are read to three or more times a week are nearly twice as likely as other children to show three or more skills associated with emerging literacy.”

—Christine W. Nord and others, “Home Literacy Activities and Signs of Children’s Emerging Literacy” (Statistics in Brief, November 1999)