



F5F TIPS & MESSAGING

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These tips have been provided by State Library for the benefit of developing literacy skills in children aged 5 years and under. For more information on the statewide First 5 Forever program please visit the [official website](#)

Take turns talking

Children are programmed to learn language by being in conversation. Take turns talking to your child throughout the day and try to keep the conversation going. The more back and forth turns you have talking, the better.

Wordless picture books

Try reading a 'wordless' picture book with your child. This can be daunting when you are used to being guided by the text, but it can get lots of conversation going. Start by talking about what you see on each page.

Parachute play

Grab a bed sheet and hold an edge each. Use it like a parachute and sing while you make it go up and down, side to side and around together. Try singing Grand Old Duke of York or Row, Row, Row Your Boat while you play.

Cultivate vocabularies

The number of words your child knows has most likely just exploded. Keep this expansion of vocabulary going by adding information about what something is doing. Model the use of verbs like 'play', 'go' and 'walk'. Throw in interesting ones as well like 'slurp', 'slither', or 'paddle'.

We're going on a sound hunt

Encourage your child to listen carefully for different sounds by going on a 'sound hunt'. See if your child can find a squeaking sound, a chirping sound, a loud sound or a soft sound. They will be making all kinds of brain connections!

What can we do now?

Stuck for ideas on what to play next? Looking at books can spark ideas, or go outside and have a nature hunt to see what you can find.

Location, location, location

Give your child opportunities to use location words like in, on, under, or beside by asking 'where' questions. Borrow books such as *Where is the Green Sheep?* from your local library to reinforce this language.

Broaden horizons with books

Sharing books with your child broadens their knowledge of the world and sparks their imagination. There are things in books that we don't see every day, like snow and polar bears, castles and dragons or lava and volcanoes! Give your library card a workout to access lots of different books.

That doesn't rhyme

Try to 'trick' your child by switching a word that rhymes out for a word that doesn't. For example, 'Up above the world so high, like a diamond in the tree'. Make the alternative words as ridiculous as you like.

Past tense practice

You may have noticed that your child's sentences are longer. They might have started using past tense verbs like 'walked' and 'jumped'. They won't always get it right and may say things like 'goed' instead of 'went'. They are still figuring out how our complicated language works!

Use comments too

Asking questions can keep your child engaged, but throw some comments in there too, like "He's cheeky, that Dingo!" Think out loud about what you notice on some of the pages as well, for example: "I think he might be hiding."

Rock the microphone

Use spoons or hairbrushes as microphones and have karaoke session. Face one another and perform a duet!

Counting back songs

There are lots of songs that involve counting back from five! Five Speckled Frogs, Five Little Ducks, Five Little Monkeys Jumping on the Bed, Five Cheeky Monkeys Swinging in the Tree. Hold up fingers to show the numbers as you count backwards.

Dress up for pretend play

Put together a basket or box of old clothes for dress-ups. Your child will enjoy getting in to character for some pretend play.

One plural, two plurals

Your child may be using plurals like 'dogs' or 'legs'. There are some irregular plurals in our language that they may still be figuring out, for example 'feet'. not 'foots'. Your child should eventually pick these up as they hear the correct words.

Explore a book by it's cover

Try looking at the front cover and talking about what you see with your child before diving in to a book. It's often interesting to see what they notice.

Freestyling

Make up a rap about what you are doing, or about your day. Get your child to help you come up with words that rhyme.

The anatomy of a book

Now and then, point out different parts of the book and name them. Use language like 'pages', 'words', 'front', 'back', 'cover' and 'title'. Over time, your child will build up lots of valuable knowledge about how books and print work.

Body percussion

Use your body to make sound while you sing your favourite songs. Clap, tap and stomp along to the rhythm.

Questions to spark deeper thinking

You can ask open-ended questions while playing with your child to spark their imagination and creativity. Try “Tell me about what you've done” or “How could you use that?” They make think of a new direction that they might like to take the play.

Sequence it

Use sequencing words when talking about your day. For example: “First i'll put away the shopping, then i'll make us a sandwich”

Letter spotto

Your child will be gradually gaining an understanding about how print works. Try pointing out the letters from their name in books, and on signs or packaging. As time goes on, you can have fun going on letter hunts and even word hunts.

Vary your singing voices

Try singing in different ways. Use a loud singing voice, then a whisper voice. Sing in character voices or make your voice go really high and really low.

Explore open ended materials

Provide some bits and pieces like blocks, cardboard boxes, feathers, leaves or sticks. Wait a bit before asking your child what they want to do or make. They might want to explore the materials before they come up with an idea.

Take turns as you read

Each time as you read with your child, try to get them involved. This might mean they turn the pages, point things out and take turns talking while you read. Think of its as a conversation and the book is just a tool to help it along.

Paying attention to detail

As your child gets older, they will enjoy books with more complicated or detailed illustrations. Children love to look carefully and discover all of the things going on in the detail of the illustrations.

Take more turns in the conversation

Be in the moment and when you can, try to make it last a tiny bit longer, by expanding on what your child says. 'You see the duck?' (Pause) 'It's putting its head underwater, looking for some food'. Pause and wait for a response . More turns in the conversation = more opportunities to learn.

Learning in the kitchen

Cooking and preparing food offers endless learning opportunities for your child including hearing and using new words, measuring, following the steps of a recipe and seeing how the ingredients change throughout the cooking process. Your child will get to use all of their senses too!

How fingers rhymes help with writing

Action songs like Incy Wincy Spider help build the fine motor control that your child needs to hold a pencil to draw and write. By joining in with the actions they will gain more control over all the little muscles in their wrists, hand and fingers.

Guess the missing rhyming word

Choose books with rhymes and let your child fill in the rhyming word. This will help them later on with being able to hear and manipulate sounds in words.

Take a breath and wait

Remember to leave pauses in your conversations with your child. You don't have to do all the talking all the time! Give them time to think and process what is happening and to respond.

Explore and experiment

Conduct simple science experiments together. Ask what will happen if...? Watch what happens and talk about your findings together.

Musical freeze

Play a game of musical freeze where your child stops moving when the singing or music stops. Stop and go games are great for building listening and self-regulation skills.

Explore alphabet books

Try sharing an alphabet book with your child. Talk about how the pictures on the page start with the same sound, for example 'sand', 'sun', 'star', 'socks'. Hearing and manipulating sounds in words is an important part of learning to read and write.

How chores can improve language

Get your child involved in jobs around the house and give simple instructions for them to follow: “Can you find the sock that matches this one?” or “Let's pick up all the cars first”. Your little helper will be building their concentration and oral language skills.

Storytelling skills and sequencing

Act out familiar stories using dress-ups, puppets or props. This will help to develop your child's storytelling skills, including the ability to put events into an order that makes sense.

Clean up little star

Pack up time? Sing this little song to the tune of Twinkle Twinkle: Clean up, clean up little star, stop and clean up where you are. Time to put our toys away, we'll get him out another day Clean up clean up little star, stop and clean up where you are.

It's OK to skip pages

Remember you don't have to read a book word for word, from front to back. It's okay to skip pages, make up different words, or just talk about the pictures. It's about spending time together, growing a love of reading and books.

Understand instructions

Your child may be ready to follow a two-step instruction like “pick up your toy and put it in the box” or may still need instructions broken down step-by-step, especially if the task or the objects are new to them. Follow their cues and give them as much support as needed.

Rhyming word matching game

Put together a collection of toys or items that rhyme. For example a car and a star, a sock and a block, a cat and a hat. Can your child match the words that rhyme as you name the objects? Help out by modelling first if you need to.

Singing and working memory

Songs can help to build your child's working memory. Try songs that add onto earlier parts like She'll Be Coming Round the Mountain. Backward-counting songs are also good, or songs where you have to remember a long list, like the Alphabet song.

Savour the sound of new words

Reading is a wonderful way to build your child's vocabulary. Books contain words that we don't use very often. Children savour the sound of new and interesting words. If needed, give them a similar word, show them, or do an action that helps them understand what the word means.

Name your feelings

Use language to tell your child about your feelings. For example "I'm tired, so i think we should have some quiet time". Modelling how to use language to communicate and regulate emotions will teach your child a valuable lifelong skill.

Musical statues, with a twist

Play musical statues where your child has to freeze when the music or singing stops. Make it trickier by getting them to freeze in different positions, for example, standing on one leg, or with arms in the air. This helps with understanding instructions.

Revisit the favourites

Repeat your child's favourite books again and again. Little ones love revisiting familiar stories and delight in knowing what comes next.

Write a shopping list

Get your child involved in writing a shopping list. This is a real-life literacy activity that will show them that reading and writing is part of our everyday lives.

Choosing books

Let your child choose some books when you visit the library. Trying different books is part of fostering a love of reading. It doesn't matter if a book doesn't turn out to be very interesting, you can just return it and get some more!

Race and chase

Sometimes you just need a high energy activity. Go outside and play chasing games or have races. Talk about first, second and third.

Which word doesn't rhyme?

Say three words. Two rhyme and one doesn't, for example 'dog, log, sun'. Can your child pick out the word that doesn't rhyme?

Scat Session

Have a little jazz 'scat session'. Improvise with some wordless vocals and have your child sing the sounds back to you. Start with easy consonant and vowel combos like 'shalalala' or 'doobedoobedoo'.

Look for rhythm, rhyme and repetition

Share books with rhythm, rhyme and repetition. Check your local library for Dr Seuss books or anything by Lynley Dodd. There are loads more fantastic ones that the library staff can help you find.

Wonder out loud

Share your wonderings out loud with your child. The statement 'I wonder...' can encourage some deep thinking from your child and invite responses in the same way that open-ended questions do.

Same and Different

Talk about same and different while you play. How are the puzzle pieces the same? How are they different?

Take turns as you read

Each time as you read with your child, try to get them involved. This might mean they turn the pages, point things out and take turns while you read. Think of it as a conversation and the book is just a tool to help it along.

Tell us more

Encourage your child to think a bit deeper and tell you a little more about what they are thinking. Try saying "Tell us more" or "Why do you think that?" or "Do you have any different ideas?"

Send a postcard

Send a postcard to a relative or friend. Write your child's words for them or get them involved in writing or drawing a message.

Be word detectives

When you come across a new word in a book, instead of explaining it right away, try asking your child what they think it means. Perhaps reread the sentence and see if they can pick it up from the context clues.

Secure word knowledge through repetition

Reading the same books over and over will allow your child to build a solid understanding of the words used and their meanings. The repeated exposure will make their new word knowledge secure.

Make comparisons

Talk about same and different. How is your child's outfit the same as yours today? How is it different?

Make a book

Make little books about a family event. Use photos or drawings and write down your child's words as they recount the experience. You can both enjoy looking back on it later!

What was the story about?

Talk about the story after you've finished reading. Who were the main characters? What were they like? Did something go wrong in the story? How was the problem fixed? This will develop your child's ability to retell a story.

Monitor for understanding

Watch your child's body language and expressions to see if they understand what you are saying. Rephrase, clarify or give an example if needed.

Tuning into language patterns

As your child sings and rhymes, they are unconsciously 'tuning in' to the patterns and sounds of language, forming the basis of the knowledge he will need when learning about letters and sounds.

After reading the story

After you've closed the book, get out the pencils, pens or crayons and draw about it. Ask your child about their picture and write down their words. This simple extension of the book experience will deepen your child's understanding and give them a chance to use any new words they learnt.

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