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LITERACY TIPS

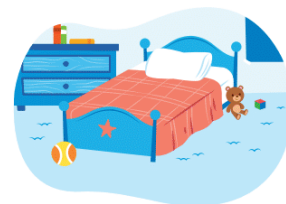
Label Drawings to Build Vocabulary

Labeling pictures is a concrete way to introduce and reinforce vocabulary. Next time your child is drawing pictures, challenge them to add as many details as they can to their art. Ask them to describe their artwork, and then encourage them to label items in the picture. If they draw themselves at the pool, for example, encourage them to label their swimsuit, goggles, towels, pool toys, and more!

Label Your Room!

In first grade, it's not yet necessary for children to spell words exactly right. It is more important that they work on the process of writing itself. Create opportunities for informal writing practice by asking your child to help you label things in their room. Get some small pieces of paper, masking tape, and a marker. Encourage them to label baskets of toys, blocks, bricks, or books and ask questions to elicit simple, spellable responses:

- “Where do you go to sleep?” (bed)
- “What kind of stuffed animal is this?” (dog, cat, fish, bear, etc)
- “Where do we keep your toys?” (bin)



After each object is named, guide your child to write the word on a label. Encourage them to do their best and offer support by sounding out the word again to help them hear each letter. Then help your child tape the label onto the object. Celebrate your child's writing by referring to the labels when possible.

Break Up Words

Identifying letter sounds is an important foundation for learning to read and write. Help your child practice identifying letter sounds by breaking up the sounds in 3-letter CVC (Consonant Vowel Consonant) words—words that begin with a consonant, have a vowel in the middle, and end with a consonant. Purposefully voice each letter distinctly so your child can hear the beginning, middle, and ending sounds clearly. Ask your child to put the sounds together and guess what the word is.

Use words like:

- cat: (“c – a – t”)
- lap
- bed
- ten
- pig
- big
- dog
- job
- bus
- nut



Extend this activity by having your child write down the words they hear (don’t worry about spelling accuracy) or identify specific CVC words in a book.

Check for Understanding

As you read books aloud, stop every few pages and check in with your child. Ask them questions to ensure they understand the content and are thinking about what they are reading. If your child isn’t comprehending a part of the book, go back to the page where they last understood and start rereading from there.

Ask questions like:

- “What just happened?”
- “What is that character’s name?”
- “Which words do you think best describe this character?”
- “How do you think the character feels?”
- “How does the story make you feel?”
- “What do you think will happen next?”

Asking your child to explain the characters’ emotions will teach them to express what they are feeling, building their emotional vocabulary and communication skills. Discussing the story events will improve your child’s reading comprehension and sequencing skills.

Play Verb Charades!

Charades is a game in which one player tries to get other players to guess a word without speaking; instead, they use actions to communicate their clues. Play simple charades with your child and have them guess what you are doing. For this version of charades, make every word you use a verb. Explain to your child, “A verb is an action word. A verb

says what you do. Let's make every clue a verb." Use words like:

- Running
- Singing
- Jumping
- Hopping
- Clapping
- Snapping
- Dancing

If your child needs help at first, ask them, "What am I doing right now?" as you perform the action. Once they guess correctly, it's their turn to give you clues!

TECHNOLOGY TIPS

Paper Airplane

Sequencing is integral to coding. A program's code outlines steps in a specific order—if the steps are out of order, the program won't work. You can practice sequencing with activities that require adherence to chronological steps to get the desired result.

Look up how to make a simple paper airplane; print out the instructions or write them down in simple steps. Follow the sequence of steps to make your paper airplanes together. If the plane doesn't fly properly or you run into other problems, go back to the last step you completed successfully and try again from there.

Bonus: Take those airplanes for a test flight! Whose plane flies farther?

MATH TIPS

Measure Around the House

Help your child use a ruler to measure objects around your home. Remind your child to line up the end of the ruler with the end of the object. Keep an eye out as your child measures—you may need to remind them about proper ruler placement!

Give your child a list of items to measure and have them write the results next to each object's name. Suggestions for items to measure include:

- Length of a playing card
- Height of a favorite stuffed animal
- Length of different drawing tools like crayons, pencils, and markers
- Height of a cup
- Length of a book when it's opened and closed



Play War to Practice Comparing

The card game War relies on numerical comparison skills. As you review the rules, use the vocabulary terms greater than, less than, and equal to. “When your card is greater than mine, you keep the cards. When your card is less than mine, I keep the cards. When your card is equal to mine, we have a ‘war’ to see who wins the stack of cards.” As you play, continue to use the math terms: “9 is greater than 7, so you win the hand!”

How to play War:

- Divide the deck evenly, giving each player twenty-six cards.
- Each player places their stack of cards facedown in front of them.
- To play a hand, each player flips their top card faceup at the same time. Whoever has the card with the greater value takes both cards and places them in their pile.
- If both players flip over a card with the same value (such as a two and a two, or a jack and a jack), it's time for a ‘war.’ Each player places three cards facedown and one card faceup. The player with the card showing the greatest value takes all of the cards played in that hand.
- During a ‘war,’ if the faceup cards are the same again, the players place another three cards facedown and one card faceup. Whoever's card is of greater value wins the battle. Repeat until someone has a higher card.
- The game ends when someone wins all fifty-two cards in the deck.

If your child is not familiar with the cards in a standard deck, explain the values of the face cards or else remove them from the deck and play with only the numbered cards.

Play Board Games to Practice Sequencing

Sequencing is an important skill with widespread application in all subject areas, especially math and literacy. Board games are a fun way to improve sequencing skills—they provide low-stakes opportunities to follow directions and work in a prescribed order. When you play games with your child, ensure they understand the rules before starting. Check in with your child as you play and ask sequencing questions like, “What happens next?” or “How will that move get you closer to winning?”

Here are some games with clear rules that children can easily follow:

- Candy Land
- Chutes and Ladders
- Trouble
- Guess Who?
- Mancala
- Sorry!

Build Mental Math Skills

Mental math refers to the math we do “in our head,” without writing anything down. Help your child strengthen their mental math skills by creating opportunities for them to think flexibly about numbers throughout the day. Spice up your commute to school by practicing skip counting by 2s, 5s, and 10s, practice counting back from 20 when microwaving leftovers, or play a quick game of “Ten Fingers.” To play, say a number between 1 and 10, and ask your child to show you that many fingers. Then ask how many more fingers they’ll need to make ten fingers. This reinforces making combinations of 10, which will help them with more complex addition and subtraction in the future.

Play “What’s My Number?”

Think of a number (start with a number 20 or less and increase when your child is ready for more of a challenge) and give hints describing that number. Use hints like:

- I’m thinking of a number that is less than 20 (or 100).
- I’m thinking of a number that is greater than 2 (or 20).

- My number is odd (or even)
- If you add 2 (or 5 or 10, etc) to my number, it is ____.
- If you subtract 1 (or 2 or 10, etc) from my number, it is ____.
- If you double my number, it is ____.

Here's an example for the number 8:

- I'm thinking of an even number.
- My number is less than 10.
- If you double me, you get 16.
- What is my number?

Properties of Operations

On index cards, write 5 addition facts, but do not include the answers (e.g., $3 + 7 = ?$). Use 5 other index cards to write the same addition facts with the addends switched (e.g., $7 + 3 = ?$). Turn the cards face down, mix them up, and arrange them like a memory game. Take turns flipping two cards at a time to find the pairs of addition facts. Once a pair is found, challenge your child to solve the addition. Help them model the addition using small objects like marbles, pasta, or paperclips. Point out that even though the addends are in a different order, the sum of matching facts is the same. This activity will reinforce the commutative property of addition and help with addition practice.

Counting to 120

Next time you are on a walk, in the car, or have a slow moment, give your child counting challenges. Use 120 as the maximum number and have your child count forward or backward starting from a random number. This activity will help strengthen your child's counting skills and number order sense.

Place Value: What's the Number?

Think of a two-digit number, like 21. Have your child guess the number by saying how many tens and ones that make up the number. For example, for the number 21, you would say, "My mystery number has 2 tens and 1 one. What's the number?" Have the child write the number on a piece of paper or an index card and then hold it up and say the

number aloud. Once you have played a few rounds, modify the game so that you take turns with one person naming a two-digit number and the other writing and saying how many tens and ones make up that number. This will help your child practice composing and decomposing numbers into tens and ones.

Addition Strategies: Make Tens

Remove the face cards and the 10 cards from a standard deck of cards. Tell your child that the value of the ace is 1. Shuffle the cards and deal them between you and your child. See who can sort their cards so that the values make 10. The person with the greatest number of tens wins. After you have determined a winner, go through each of the card combinations to check they are correct. This activity will help your child practice composing tens, a strategy that makes addition easier.

Subtraction Strategies: Subtract Tens

Separate 50 buttons, pieces of pasta, or rice grains. Have your child group the objects into groups of 10. Then get your child to move a few groups to the side. Ask them, "How many groups of ten are left?" and "How many ones are in those tens?" This activity will reinforce your child's understanding of place value and help with subtraction practice.

Complete the Shape!

Cut out circles, triangles, rectangles, squares, and trapezoids from construction paper of the same color. Cut the shapes into halves or fourths, mix all the pieces and lay them so all are visible. Get your child to put the pieces together to create a whole shape. As they look for the pieces, encourage your child to talk about the attributes of the shape by asking them questions like, "What shape are you completing?" and "How many vertices/sides/parallel sides does it have?"

Data: Tally Marks

Help your child come up with categories like favorite colors, favorite fruits or favorite pets. Guide them to create a tally chart listing the options for each category on a

piece of paper. Have your child survey family members and friends to collect their responses in their tally chart and use tally marks to record the answers. Then have your child talk about what their tally chart shows. Have them identify the category that received the most votes, the least votes, and any categories that have the same amount of votes. Have your child count aloud the total number of tally marks to find out how many people participated in the survey. This activity will help your child develop an understanding of data collection and analysis.

Time Riddles

As your child learns to tell time, help them practice by giving them time riddles for times on the hour and half hour. Use riddles like, “I am the time where the little hand is pointing to 8 and the big hand is pointing to 12. What time am I?” and “It’s 2:30. Where is the little hand pointing? Where is the big hand pointing?” Once your child becomes faster at answering, have them give you the riddles.

SCIENCE TIPS

Go Cloud Watching

Look up at the clouds next time you and your child go for a walk or play in the park. Ask your child what they notice:

- “What shapes do you see in the clouds?”
- “How would you describe the clouds? Are they puffy? Can you identify individual clouds, or do they look spread out like a blanket?”
- “What color are the clouds? Does that affect how bright or dark the day is?”
- “Are the clouds blocking the sun? How does that affect the temperature?”

Talking about and examining the world around them will help strengthen your child’s observational skills. It will also encourage them to consider how the world works.

SOCIAL STUDIES TIPS

Community: Dream Big!

What could make your community even better? Next time you're in the car or on a walk, ask your child what new business, public place, or public event they would like to see become part of their community. What service would it provide? How would it benefit the community?

Brainstorm together by thinking about places and events you love in your community, like read-alouds at the library or community planting days. Research community resources and activities that your family has not yet tried. Point out empty lots or vacant buildings and imagine together what they might be used for. Then ask the question again—what place or activity would make their community an even better place?

It's never too early to encourage kids to think about their role in the community and the difference they can make!

SPANISH TIPS



Amanda Manda

Play a variation of “Simon Says” called “Amanda Manda”. Choose an animal in Spanish and say “Amanda Manda (animal)!”. Your child then has to name and mime the animal. For example, if you say “Amanda Manda Vaca!” your child would pretend to be a cow. Start with two or three animals and then incorporate more as your child expands their animal vocabulary.

¡Me gusta!

As your child gets familiar with the expressions “Me gusta” and “No me gusta,” ask questions about their food likes during meals. Create a simple game by asking:

- ¿Te gusta....? (Do you like...?) while pointing to a food item. [Teh goo-stah?]. Encourage your child to answer “Sí, me gusta” or “No, no me gusta”

- Busca la leche. (Search for milk.) [Boo-sca lah leh-che]
- ¿Qué te gusta? (What do you like?) [keh teh goo-stah?] and your child answers “Me gusta (food in Spanish)” or “No me gusta (food in Spanish)”

You can switch roles, letting your child ask you about your likes and dislikes. Engaging in casual conversations in Spanish during daily activities, like meals or playtime, will help reinforce basic vocabulary.

¡Frío, frío! ¡Caliente, caliente!

Your child closes their eyes as you hide an object in the room. Then, ask them to open their eyes and ask ¿Dónde está...? (Where’s the...?) [Don-deh eh-stah?]. As your child moves around the room, you say “Caliente, caliente (hot, hot)” if they are close to the object or “Frío frío (cold, cold)” if they are far away.

Spanish Resources

Click [here](#) to access written and audible pronunciation guides!

PHONICS TIPS

Take Turns Reading Aloud

Take turns reading aloud with your child. You can alternate reading aloud page by page, paragraph by paragraph, or even by character!

Children will benefit from hearing you model fluency and intonation when you read aloud. When children read aloud, they’re building fluency skills—the ability to read with ease and efficiency. Give children a little extra time to sound out words for themselves. When they struggle, you can model sounding out words.

You can also model comprehension skills when reading together. Ask questions aloud such as:

- “How did that happen? I wonder what’s going to happen next.”
- “Who do you think is going to...?”
- “I wonder why...?”

Take Advantage of the Library

Public libraries provide tons of free valuable resources for children and families. Librarians can offer specific recommendations about books for your child as well as interesting authors and illustrators for you to consider. Often displays are seasonal and provide children with exposure to a wide variety of subjects, genres, and levels of books. This is especially helpful for reluctant readers who might benefit from seeing different kinds of books. A child who might shy away from chapter books might enjoy how-to books or books filled with fun facts and trivia. The best part is your family can try a variety of books for free. Being interested and enjoying reading are important components to becoming a strong reader.



Reading in Everyday Life

Emphasize the practical and enjoyable purposes for reading and writing.

Point out when you use reading and writing in your everyday life. For example, narrate when you're writing a grocery list or reading a recipe, reading instructions, writing a message in a greeting card, or playing a word game. Talk about the books, magazines, or articles you're reading for information or entertainment. Knowing the benefits and uses of reading and writing give children the motivation and desire to read on their own.

Invite children to do their own writing – by themselves or as a family. You might write a few words about your weekend in a calendar or journal, write a letter to a family member, write a story or a joke to share, or write a list of favorite foods or movies.

Take Time and Take Breaks

Reading aloud is hard work! When children are reading aloud to you, they're trying to integrate several concepts: identifying letters, the sounds they represent, blending them into words, and making meaning. As much as possible, give children time to sound out words. If they start guessing based on the first letters, encourage them to slow down. Gently point out the letters they might have missed. Reading for 20 minutes a day doesn't mean your child has to be reading aloud for 20 minutes straight. You can take turns reading aloud, talk about the illustrations or details of the story, and take breaks between sessions.

Follow Along with Learning at School

When possible, reinforce the skills children are learning at school in your everyday home life. Does your child's teacher send home a weekly or monthly email or newsletter? Do they send home writing projects or completed activity sheets? Ask your child to read aloud what they've worked on at school. Show enthusiasm and ask questions to give them practice using these new skills.

Make connections to things you're doing at home. For example, if children are learning about words that start with blends, point out words you see at home that start with blends. If they're writing fiction stories at school, talk about the fiction stories you're reading at home. If they are writing how-to books, engage in conversations about things they know how to do at home.

