

Building Blocks: The Sequence of Emergent Literacy Skills

Why Is This Important to My Child?

Language Development

Listening comprehension precedes reading comprehension. For children to be able to talk, write, decode, and comprehend they must have someone to communicate with them verbally. Children can learn language only from a human voice during the first year of life. Make sure that you talk to your child as you go about your day. Children will imitate sounds as they first begin to talk. A typical two-year-old has a vocabulary of 200 words but can understand almost everything that is said.

Between the ages of 3 and 6, children are in a verbal learning stage. This means that they say what they are thinking. This method helps children understand. It is very typical for children to ask 10 questions an hour! Be patient and let them talk.

Children learn to read from everyday symbols such as stop signs and pictures. These are referred to as environmental print. Letters become symbols, especially letters in their names. There is not phonetic recognition in early childhood.

Cognitive Development

Children's brains have a trait known as plasticity. This means that their brains can easily adapt to new learning experiences provided in their environment. An environment full of talking, singing, fingerplays, nursery rhymes, and daily shared reading will provide the necessary stimulation to help your child's speech develop.

Children are born with the cognitive ability to learn any language on the earth. The neurons necessary for speech specific to a language either grow or die off depending on a child's early exposure to language. This means that young children can learn multiple languages very easily if they are exposed to them routinely.

In the book *If You Give a Mouse a Cookie*, by Laura Numeroff, children learn important cognitive tasks such as sequencing. Sequencing is when a string of events follow one another in a predictable pattern. Children are delighted when they can predict the next event in a sequence. Help your child develop this ability by reading them this story and asking them what they think the mouse is going to want next.

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Physical Development

In *If You Give a Mouse a Cookie* the young boy cleans up after his mouse friend, who makes a mess around his house. A wonderful way to support your child's physical development is to allow them to help you with age-appropriate household chores. Age appropriate means that you choose chores that are neither too simple nor too challenging for your child. For example, an older baby may be able to help you place toys in a basket, a toddler can put his shoes in the closet, and a preschooler can stand on a stool and help you rinse the dishes.

A great way to have your little one help around the house is by purchasing child-sized brooms, mops, and dusters. Although your child may not be cleaning very well, they will feel responsible and develop muscle strength and coordination as they help you.

Social/Emotional Development

Healthy emotional development and good social skills are critical to academic success. Simple children's stories contain a wealth of social and emotional principles woven into the storyline. *If You Give a Mouse a Cookie* teaches children about cause and effect by showing that our actions have consequences. It also teaches children about the importance of caring for their home and belongings as the young boy in the story carefully cleans up the mess his mouse friend makes. At one point in the story, the mouse misses his family and feels a little bit sad. He handles his feelings by drawing a picture of his loved ones.

As you read books to your child and tell them stories on a regular basis, your little one will begin to internalize the principles taught in the story. Carefully select stories based on social skills your child is working on.

You can reinforce these skills by acting out your child's favorite stories. You can act out *If You Give a Mouse a Cookie* by using homemade sock puppets or by dressing up as the characters in the book. Acting out your child's favorite stories will also help with listening comprehension. Finally, this activity provides your young child the opportunity to act and think like another character, which teaches empathy.