

Best Practice and Activity Ideas for the EYFS Literacy

The suggestions for this area of learning should be read alongside the following:

- Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (DfE 2014)
- Development Matters in the Early Years Foundation Stage (Early Education 2012)
- Teaching and Play in the Early Years - a balancing act? (Ofsted 2015)

The ideas are intended to support learning and development for children in receipt of funding for the Early Years Free Entitlement for three and four year olds.

How children learn: the Characteristics of Effective Learning

Teaching and learning in the EYFS must be informed by these characteristics:

playing and exploring - children investigate and experience things, and 'have a go'

active learning - children concentrate and keep on trying if they encounter difficulties, and enjoy achievements

creating and thinking critically - children have and develop their own ideas, make links between ideas, and develop strategies for doing things

The suggested ideas should be integrated into a cycle of observation, assessment and planning where children's needs and interests are central to planning and provision.

Please note that the Early Learning Goals define the level of progress expected for children at the end of the EYFS, at the end of the Reception year.

Literacy is one of the specific areas of learning in the EYFS. The specific areas include essential skills and knowledge. They grow out of the prime areas and provide important contexts for learning.

The acquisition of literacy skills is experience dependent since it can occur at any point in childhood or in adulthood. Becoming literate is culturally constrained and relies on learning a body of knowledge in including the alphabetic code (i.e. the teaching of systematic synthetic phonics) in the same way that learning mathematics largely relies on securing knowledge and understanding of symbolic representation for number. Babies and very young children enjoy sharing books and mark-making begins at a very young age; these skills need to be fostered from infancy in a climate of talk about reading and writing as a child becomes increasingly aware of the importance of words and letters.

Dame Clare Tickell 2012

This area is divided into two aspects

1. Reading

2. Writing

Early Learning Goal for Reading

NB This is the age related expectation for the end of the Reception year

Children read and understand simple sentences.

They use phonic knowledge to decode regular words and read them aloud accurately. They also read some common irregular words.

They demonstrate understanding when talking with others about what they have read.



Positive Relationships: The Role of the Adult

The role of the adult is:

- to give children opportunities to listen to language by sharing and enjoying a whole range of rhymes, music, songs, poetry and stories
- to talk to children about characters and their feelings about stories and to encourage discussion and comparison with people from their own experience
- to create an environment rich in print
- to provide experiences, opportunities and resources that will enable children to interact with environmental print
- to support children's learning about environmental print, for example, asking questions about its meaning
- to create an attractive book area
- to encourage children to predict outcomes, to think of alternative endings and to compare story lines to their own experience
- to introduce and use non-fiction texts with children
- to encourage children to find out information through use of books, other texts and ICT
- to model, scaffold and encourage children to use a range of reading strategies
- to encourage children to recall words they see frequently, for example, EXIT, friends' names
- to model oral blending and segmenting of sounds
- to play Bingo games

- to provide story sacks and props to enact stories which support children to talk about a story's characters and sequence of events and encourage children to create poems and to make up stories of their own
- to provide print in meaningful contexts
- to give children opportunities to play with language, for example, linking language with physical movement in action songs and rhymes, role play and practical experiences
- to be a lively and inspiring role model
- to provide opportunities in the learning environment to hear songs, poems and stories, for example, listening area
- to provide role play where children can act out rhymes and stories
- to provide opportunities for children who use alternative communication systems to develop ways of accessing texts

For older children:

- to model appropriate vocabulary, for example, author, illustrator
- to help children acquire the concept of a word
- to plan opportunities for shared reading
- to model writing for different purposes talking about how the writing is organised

Enabling Environments



The learning environment includes indoor and outdoor provision. Child initiated play will be enhanced by adult support **when appropriate** to support and extend children's learning.

Provide

- an attractive book area to include
 - comfortable seating
 - appropriate storage
 - range of books including non-fiction, story books, board books, cloth books, pop up books, stories from other cultures, rhyming books, books reflecting personal experience, poetry books, alphabet books, dual language books,

- books reflecting different lifestyles/disability, big books, books made by the children, magazines, song and music books,
- displays, for example, about favourite books/poems
 - displays of children's work about books
 - environmental print
 - pictures, posters and photographs
 - props linked to stories
- book displays
 - a stock of 'outdoor books'. These might include copies of favourite books and books that are particularly useful outdoors, for example, information books
 - signs for outdoor play, for example, road signs, markings on the ground
 - interactive display table with nursery rhyme books/puppets/ characters on lolly sticks
 - listening area with taped rhymes, poems and stories
 - book packs/story and poetry sacks (may be part of a home loan scheme). All packs should include information for parents and carers about ways to use the packs
 - names on pegs
 - name labels for finished work
 - name cards in the graphics area or for recording attendance or use of a specific area
 - print displays, for example, 'Words we can read' or displays of food packaging
 - alphabet chart
 - labels for resources
 - signs, for example, 'Please hang up your aprons here'
 - examples of writing by adults and children
 - charts of helpers
 - days of the week
 - examples of different languages
 - print in the role play area – recipe books, telephone books, maps, magazines, address books, menus, price lists, signs and labels
 - puppets
 - core rhyme/poetry pockets
 - letter shapes in sand/water
 - letter shapes – wooden , plastic
 - letter/word puzzles
 - word matching games
 - rhyming games
 - spelling games
 - ICT opportunities

Possible activities

The following examples give some ideas for experiences and activities which may be planned.

- sharing poems and rhymes:
 - action rhymes
 - number rhymes
 - nonsense rhymes
 - poems
 - clapping out rhythms
 - marching to the rhythm of a rhyme
 - acting out rhymes
 - using sound to accompany rhymes, for example, body sounds
 - using musical instruments to accompany rhymes
 - identifying rhyming words
 - making up alternate rhyming words
 - clapping out the syllables in words, for example, names
 - compare words, for example, long/short words
 - making books/displays about rhymes
 - creating poems
 - creating a word collage: creating a visual collection of shapes, pictures and words on a theme, for example, linked to a poem/rhyme

- using children's names to develop print awareness:
 - making books about the children, for example, 'Our Favourite Foods' – 'William likes cornflakes'
 - substituting the names of characters in stories and rhymes with the names of the children in the group
 - finding/identifying words that begin with the same initial sound as their name
 - comparing names, for example, Benjamin is a long word, Sam is a short word
 - making own name, for example, using letters, collage, finding letters in the sand, making names with playdough, in sand, etc
 - using names in physical activity, for example, adult holds up a child's name and they hop/jump, etc
 - making name posters – child makes poster about name or initial sound of name

- using texts as a starting point for activities:
 - acting out a story
 - making masks, puppets for role play
 - making group pictures/collage about a story
 - sequencing events from a story
 - making sound accompaniment to stories, for example, 'Peace at Last' by Jill Murphy
 - making individual books about stories

- regular systematic phonics sessions when children are ready (usually by age 5)
- to provide varied texts (sometimes simple) and encourage children to use their phonic skills to decode words

- to use big books to demonstrate phonics as the prime approach to decode words and develop children's understanding and knowledge about:
 - story settings, events and main characters
 - language patterns of stories
 - simple grammatical structures
 - rhyming
 - alliteration
 - using intonation, rhythm and phrasing to make meaning clear to others
 - how to use reading strategies, for example, illustration/contextual clues/phonemes
 - appropriate vocabulary – cover, page
 - the concept of a word
 - linking sounds to letters
 - how information can be retrieved from books and computers
- word walks: in the setting or in the local environment. Finding print and discussing meaning, why it needs to be there etc.
- making displays/books about print, for example, clothing, different languages
- print games, for example, matching games using words from packaging
- rhyming games, for example, matching rhyming words
- trips to the local library
- following instructions, for example, using recipe cards or books when cooking
- making up stories with children and making group book
- activities requiring children to find out information

Early Learning Goals for Writing

NB This is the age related expectation for the end of the Reception year

Children use their phonic knowledge to write words in ways which match their spoken sounds.

They also write some irregular common words.

They write simple sentences which can be read by themselves and others. Some words are spelt correctly and others are phonetically plausible.



Positive Relationships: The Role of the Adult

- to encourage children to draw and paint and to talk about what they have done
- to provide opportunities for children to see adults writing for a purpose
- to include opportunities for writing in role play
- to encourage children to use writing in meaningful contexts, for example, naming/labelling work
- to provide materials and opportunities for children to initiate the use of writing in their play
- to model writing with children, for example, shared writing
- to encourage children to make their own books
- to encourage children to use different forms of writing
- to act as scribe i.e. writing down what children say
- to talk to children about writing and to involve them in the process, for example, talking about what to write, choice of words etc
- talk to children about the letters in the sounds they hear at the beginning of their own names and other familiar words
- to write simple stories, poems and non-fiction books with children
- to encourage children to use their ability to hear the sounds in words as they write.
- to encourage children to reread their writing as they write
- to provide a writing area
- to ensure that children have access to a variety of mark-making and writing materials and resources which can be used throughout the learning environment (indoors and outdoors)
- to value children's writing
- to display children's mark making and writing
- to provide opportunities for children who use alternative communication systems to develop ways of recording

For older children:

- model writing so children can see spelling in action
- support and scaffold children's writing as opportunities arise
- demonstrating the segmenting process of phonemes and how this is represented in graphemes, punctuation etc
- expect children to begin to represent their grapheme/phonemes knowledge when writing in meaningful contexts.

Enabling Environments



The learning environment includes indoor and outdoor provision. Child initiated play will be enhanced by adult support **when appropriate** to support and extend children's learning.

Practitioners should consider the opportunities for mark making that different areas of provision can offer and which resources will help to promote writing in each area.

Provide

- numerous mark-making opportunities for younger children (see roots of mark making and handwriting in Playing and exploring and Physical Development) and writing boxes for older children which include word banks for indoor and outdoor play
- opportunities in the learning environment to encourage the need to write
- role play areas that encourage a real purpose for mark making/writing
- displays of adults' and children's mark making/writing
- writing in different languages
- handwritten and computer generated print
- name cards
- calendar
- address books
- note pads
- signs, labels – for models, car wash, Post Office etc
- paper – assorted sizes, shapes, colours and types
- assorted ready to use 'books', for example, zig-zag books
- writing paper – lined and unlined
- envelopes
- message board
- chalk boards and chinks
- clip boards with pencils attached
- alphabet lines or posters
- assorted mark making equipment – pencils, crayons, chinks etc.

- fixing equipment, for example, Sellotape, hole puncher, stapler, glue stick, paper clips
- simple dictionaries
- post box, stamps
- ICT, for example, computer keyboard, typewriter



Possible activities

The following examples give some ideas for experiences and activities which may be planned.

Early years practitioners need to model writing for various reasons and plan a wide range of opportunities for children to write in meaningful contexts. It is important for children to experiment with letter shapes and forms and to develop the motivation to want to write.

- drawing or painting activities:
 - representing an experience through drawing, for example, finding a snail, visiting the beach
- making lists:
 - holiday lists
 - shopping lists
 - children's names 'Who's here today?'
 - 'Who has used the computer today?'
 - 'Who has listened to the story tape today?'
- making cards:
 - postcards
 - greeting
 - birthday
 - thank you
- making posters:
 - posters for role play, for example, menus, price lists, advertisements

- making maps:
 - making floor map with markings for cars etc
 - making maps following print awareness walk showing signs/print, etc.
- making books (individual and group):
 - diaries, for example, 'My bean diary'
 - stories made up by the children, for example, 'My adventure on the Magic Carpet'
 - group stories scribed by the adult
 - books about events 'We went to the farm'
 - instructional books 'How to make a fruit salad'
 - sequencing a familiar story, for example, 'The Hungry Caterpillar' by Eric Carle
 - books linked to topics, for example, 'Our Favourite Food'
- writing letters (individually/group):
 - thank you letters
 - letters linked to stories, for example, 'Dear Zoo'
- shared writing activities:

(In shared writing sessions the adult records what the children compose. The adult writes on a flip chart so that the children can see how words are written down, how they are arranged on a page and how they are spelled.)

A variety of text types can be composed in this way. They include:

- informative captions for displays
 - letters, for example, a thank you letter to a visitor to the setting
 - stories: this may be one modelled on a known text, for example, 'Where is Spot?' may become 'Where is Sam?'
 - creating poems
- cross curricular activities:
 - recording investigations, for example, recording objects that float or sink
 - labelling maps, for example, marking treasure on treasure island map
 - labelling parts on a model, for example, using small world equipment to recreate a walk in local environment and then labelling
 - collecting data, for example, recording children's favourite colours
 - drawing/writing about something made, for example, a model, painting, collage, sewing etc.
 - using a programmable toy, for example, Roamer to deliver letters written by the children to a soft toy, for example, Talking Ted
 - when children are ready provide regular multisensory synthetic phonics sessions



Positive Relationships: The Role of the Adult

- to play fun activities with rhyming strings e.g. Hattie, battie, Mattie, rattie
- to plan opportunities for children to move rhythmically to music
- to plan opportunities for children to learn rhymes and action songs
- to plan activities that develop children's listening skills
- to encourage listening to distinguish sounds
- to help children identify rhyming
- to draw attention to the initial sounds at the beginning of words
- to talk to children about the letters that represent the sounds in words
- to encourage children to 'play' with language
- to plan interactive games to encourage children to identify sounds
- to plan to use core rhymes and core rhyming books in a systematic way
- to model writing so that children can see spelling in action
- to encourage children to apply their own knowledge of sounds to what they write
- to read children's writing so that they understand that writing is an important way of communicating
- to value children's writing

Enabling Environments – see Reading

Provide opportunities and resources to support the oral phonics group sessions.

Possible activities

The following examples give some ideas for experiences and activities which may be planned.

- general sound discrimination activities:
 - listening walks – identifying sounds indoors/outdoors
 - making/listening to tapes of everyday sounds
 - listening to everyday sounds heard behind a screen
 - identifying musical instruments from sound
 - body percussion: singing songs using body sounds (claps, knee pats, foot stamps, etc). Children identify part of body making the sound

- rhythm: singing nursery rhymes. Children move in appropriate ways, for example, marching to 'The Grand Old Duke of York'
- speech sound discrimination activities:
 - games involving children using voices in different ways and exploring a variety of sounds, for example, using voice, children make happy, sad, high or low sounds
 - songs and rhymes involving different voices and sounds, for example, 'The Wheels on the Bus'
 - songs involving children identifying children from their voice
 - using voice as a sound accompaniment, for example, adult tells a story and children provide the sound response, for example, sound of the rain, going down a slide, etc
 - making animal sounds:
 - as part of a song
 - as part of a game
 - stories involving sound response, for example, 'Peace at Last' by Jill Murphy
- rhythm and rhyme:
 - sharing rhymes/moving to rhymes
 - changing words to well known rhymes, for example, 'Hickory, Dickory Dare, the mouse fell off the chair'
 - matching objects that rhyme
 - finding the odd one out – which word/object does not rhyme
 - listing rhyming words
 - games, for example, give children a word and the act out a rhyming one
 - sharing rhyming books, for example, 'Don't Put Your Finger in the Jelly Nelly' by Nick Sharratt

Useful links

Foundation Years Highlights the importance of early language acquisition to support later literacy. www.foundationyears.org.uk

Bookstart www.bookstart.org.uk

Bookstart is a national programme that encourages all parents and carers to enjoy books with their children from as early an age as possible.

The Communication Trust www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk

The purpose of The Communication Trust is to raise awareness of the importance of speech, language and communication across the children's workforce and to enable practitioners to access appropriate training and expertise. The Communication Trust was founded by Afasic, BT Better World Campaign, Council for Disabled Children (CDC) and I CAN, who now form the programme board. Recently Scope and The Children's Society joined them. This small core group is supported by the Communication Consortium, a number of partners and stakeholders who deliver services to help children communicate.

Lawrence Educational Publications www.lawrenceeducational.co.uk/

A range of useful resources including Helping Young Children to Listen by Ros Bayley and Lynn Broadbent

Letters and Sounds www.education.gov.uk/

Letters and Sounds is a six-phase teaching programme designed to help practitioners and teachers teach children how the alphabet works for reading and spelling. This publication contains Phase 1 and is intended particularly for use by childminders, those working in private, voluntary and independent settings and other early years provision.

Cbeebies www.bbc.co.uk/cbeebies/

Fun and informative site with plenty of advice and practical ideas particularly for parents.

Words for Life www.wordsforlife.org.uk/

Full of useful tips and free resources, lively video clips and topical ideas.

Phonics play A fun interactive website for parents and practitioners
www.phonicsplay.co.uk/