



What You Can Do to Support School Readiness Skills: Birth to 12 Months

Language & Literacy Skills

Talk together. Copy babies' sounds and encourage them to imitate you. Between 6 and 12 months, babies may begin putting sounds together like "dada" and "baba." Make these sounds meaningful by repeating and expanding them: "You want more milk!"

Share books. It's never too early to start sharing books with babies. Let them explore books in whatever way they like. Offer chunky board, cloth, or soft bath books for chewing and gumming. Babies really enjoy lift-and-flap books as well. Follow the baby's lead when it comes to reading. This may sometimes mean staying on the same page the whole time or "reading" the book upside down!

Thinking Skills

Encourage children to explore objects and toys in different ways. Touching, banging, shaking, and rolling help babies learn about how things work. Talk with babies about what they are doing. "You got the truck to move by pulling the string!"

Make everyday activities "teachable moments." For example, diapering can be a time for talking about body parts that helps babies develop body awareness and learn new words. You can also sing to babies, which promotes bonding and builds language skills.

Self-Control

Help babies learn to soothe themselves. The calmer babies feel, the more in control they will be. Babies have different ways of calming down. Some need lots of rocking or hugging; others prefer to be swaddled or put down for a minute. *You teach the babies in your care to calm themselves by staying calm yourself when they lose control.* This helps them feel safe.

Teach acceptable behaviors. Tell and show babies what they *can* do, as well as what they *can't*. If a baby is banging a toy on another child, stop her and immediately show her where she *can* bang the toy, such as on the floor or wall.

Self-Confidence

Establish routines with children. Most children feel safe, confident, and in control of their world when events are predictable—when they happen in approximately the same way at the same time each day. Routines are a way to help children make sense of the world.

Do it again and again and again. Children need lots of practice doing things over and over again to succeed at a new skill. Think of the pride a baby feels when he can finally grasp the rattle and put it in his mouth by himself.