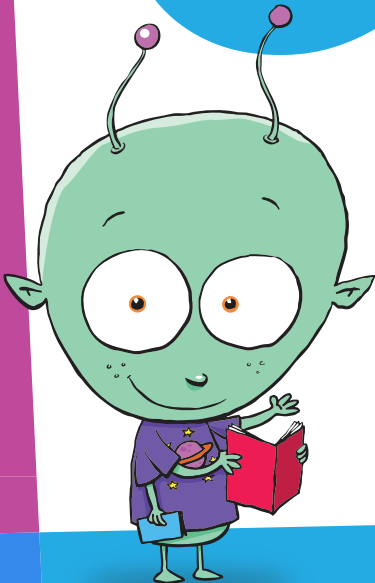


GAMES ON THE GO



And other activities
to play with your
children and family

An MCPL
**GROW A
READER**

Early Literacy Initiative



Why is playing important?

Play is an important part of a child's learning journey. Being engaged and silly with your child is just as important as reading to them. Games are a fun way to teach children cooperation and teamwork, grace in competition, and problem-solving skills. Follow along with enthusiasm as you play these games, and you will show your child that you are willing to participate—it will also inspire them to join in!

Help your child get ready to read with these simple activities.

TALKING – Make sure your child has lots of opportunities to talk with you, not just listen to you talk.

SINGING – Sing nursery rhymes so children hear the different sounds in words.

READING – Reading together is the single most important way to help children get ready to read.

WRITING – Talk to your children about what they draw, and write captions or stories together. This helps make a connection between spoken and printed language.

PLAYING – Play helps children express themselves and put thoughts into words.



SIMON SAYS...

This game is a good way for your child to learn the basics of following instructions and to be introduced to the concept of opposites as well as things like colors, different types of movement, and challenging motor skills.

Grownups, take the first turn as “Simon.” Simon gives directions on things to do.

Examples might include:

“Hop on one foot.”

“Turn in a circle.”

“Hold up the number two.”

“Pop a bubble.”

Only directions that begin with “Simon says...” should be followed. Any instructions without that phrase should be ignored. Try to see how many directions can be followed correctly.

Don't forget to take turns playing “Simon.”



Opposites

Take turns thinking of something, and then figure out what the opposite would be. There are no “right” or “wrong” answers once things start getting more objective in the game—don’t be afraid to try out ideas or objects that have no direct opposite. See how silly and creative you can be.



This is a great game for two players! First, think of a word, and keep it in your head. Grownups, count “Three, two, one...” and then each person says their word out loud at the same time. In the second round, players use the two words from round one to try to think of a word that would connect them together—then say their words at the same time again counting down from three.

Example:

Round 1: Count “Three, two, one...” Player 1 says, “Red,” and Player 2 says, “Dog.” Both players take a few seconds to think about what would connect those two words.

Round 2: Count “Three, two, one...” Both players say “Clifford!” at the same time.

Keep playing a round until you can come up with a matching word in round two—then as you get better, see how many rounds you can win in a row. Don’t get discouraged; it might take a while before you can think of the same word in round two.

20 Questions

Think of an idea, object, place, or person that your child is familiar with and might be able to guess.

Example:

What is your child's favorite place?

What is their favorite food or ice cream flavor?

What is your child's favorite toy?

Have your child ask up to 20 questions that would help them figure out the answer.

This game helps children develop problem-solving skills as well as improve their vocabulary as they try to find the correct words and questions they need to find the answer.

Tip: Start out with something easily visible in the room you are in until they get the hang of it.

Example questions:

"Is it a person?"

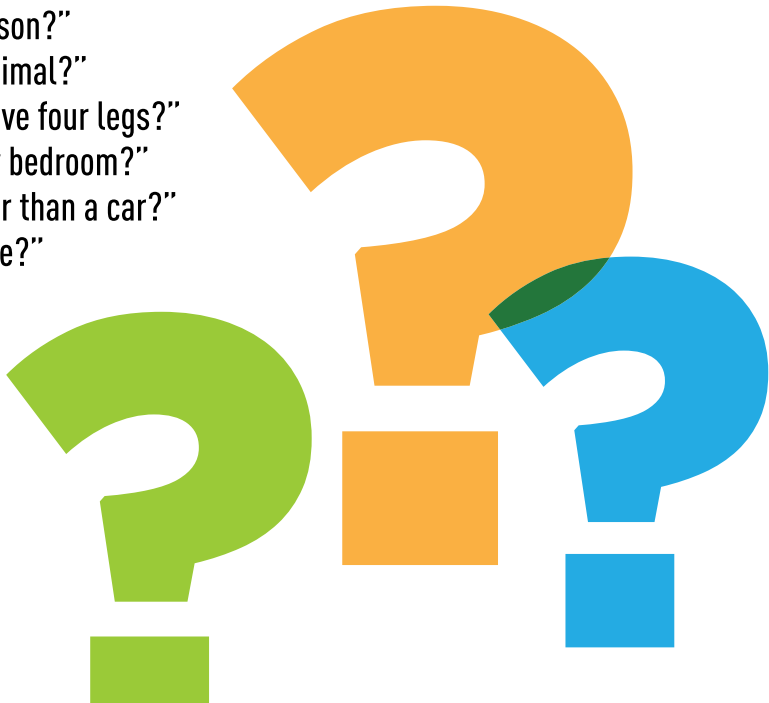
"Is it an animal?"

"Does it have four legs?"

"Is it in my bedroom?"

"Is it bigger than a car?"

"Is it purple?"





I'm Going on a Picnic.

This is a great game to help with memory and recall! Each person takes turns naming a food they will bring on their picnic. Each player, in turn, has to try and remember what is going to be at the picnic when they choose their food.

Example:

Player One: "Hot dogs"

Player Two: "Hot dogs and potato salad"

Player Three: "Hot dogs, potato salad, and lemonade"

Player One: "Hot dogs, potato salad, lemonade,
and watermelon."

Tip: Playing games that require taking turns and involve role-playing can introduce your child to the skill of self-regulation. Learning to control emotions and behavior are important concepts to master before starting school. This will help children adapt while interacting in the classroom and when they encounter unpredictable situations.

Alphabet Game

This game is fun for everyone to join in! Start by picking a category such as bugs, food, or animals. Then take turns listing words that fit into that category in alphabetical order.

Example:

Category is bugs: Ants, Bees, Caterpillars, etc...

Category is food: Apples, Broccoli, Carrots, etc...

The Category Game

Pick a category like animals, and take turns naming things from that category. This is super simple; there is no limit to the number of items that can go into these lists.

Both the Alphabet Game and the Category Game can help your child expand their vocabulary. Instead of just saying “flowers,” they can learn about lilies, roses, and geraniums.

I Spy

Help your child grow their vocabulary by “spying” something they might not know the correct term for. When children can guess the item you have secretly thought of, they can learn the new word as well.

Start by picking an object from the room you are in. Give the other player one descriptive hint: “I spy, with my little eye, something _____.” The other player guesses until they get the right answer or give up.

As you go along, try and challenge children with different types of clues:

“...something that makes noise.”

“...something hard/soft.”

“...something that begins with the letter B.”

The Counting Game

When you and your child take trips to places like the grocery store or the dentist’s office, try this fun math game. Start by picking a number and a category, then look around for things that meet the criteria.

Example: 10 blue things.

See who can find and count out 10 blue things first. For younger kids, count the objects together, instead of making it a competition.

Mirror, Mirror



This is a fun and simple way to help your child learn to move and control their bodies. Find a comfortable spot. Then you and your child should face each other. Have your child start moving very slowly (in any way they want) and you try to mirror the movements as closely as possible. Then switch roles.

Being silly and playing with your child is just as important as teaching them how to read and write!

Active use of arms and legs can encourage age development of gross motor (or big body) skills, which contributes to school readiness and learning. When playing Mirror, Mirror, try motions like crossing your arms in front of your body. If they can imitate you doing this, then they are ready to learn how to read and write.

Scrap of Paper Drop

Find a scrap of paper, like a torn receipt or part of a tissue, and drop it to the ground. Challenge your child to catch it by pinching it with their pointer finger and thumb before it hits the ground. As silly as this sounds, it works the muscles in the hands that they will use when they begin to write.

Silly Sentences

Learning to recognize letters outside of the alphabet can be hard for children, but you can help them learn with this fun and silly game! Start by letting your child choose four or five random letters—you might notice them picking the letters in their own name to start with. Use the chosen letters to begin each word of your silly sentence.

Example: SRFB—Sally read four books.

This is fun for preschoolers and early readers to try. There are no rules on how silly you can get.

Tip: If your child is struggling to come up with a sentence, try giving them a theme or topic to start.

What Is It?

This game is a great way to challenge the way your child thinks about things. We often get stuck in a rut and playing **What Is It?** helps children learn to think outside the box. First, have someone pick an object, and everyone playing has to come up with as many ways as they can think of to describe that object. Challenge yourself not to repeat answers.

Example:

It is round; it can have spokes if it is on a bike; they are on vehicles; they can be different colors; they can be different sizes; they can help people move, etc.

What Animal Is in the Car!?



For long car rides with younger children, practice animal noises by mooing or ribbiting or saying, “(gasp!) What animal is in the car?”

Tip: Practicing and learning about environmental sounds—the everyday sounds that are all around us—help children build a vocabulary. Animal sounds, construction sounds, sirens, and traffic sounds all communicate different ideas to us and are fun to play with. Even children who are not talking yet can play along with this game by hearing: “Is there a cow in this car?” and responding with the sound “Mmmooooo.”

Storytelling

This game offers fun ways to build vocabulary, build problem-solving skills, and challenge their creativity. Storytelling is also a fun way to spend time together as a family when you can't share a book. Ways to play:

Example #1: Pass the Story

This is fun for several players if you are in the car on a road trip, and it lets each player tell a few sentences of the story before passing it to the next person.

Example #2: Make It Fit Story Challenge

This is fun for two players. Pick three objects that are close to you, and challenge your child to create a story surrounding those items. Help prompt them if they get stuck. For added challenge with older kids, add a time limit to create the story in.

Example #3: One-Word Story Challenge

This one is also fun for a group! Start by picking a theme (example: princesses, ninjas, dragons, pirates, dinosaurs, etc.) and then each player says exactly one word to begin or further the story. Continue until you have reached a conclusion.

Player One: "Once" > Player Two: "Upon"

Player Three: "A" > Player Four: "Midnight"

Player One: "There" > Player Two: "Were"

Player Three: "17" > Player Four: "Ninjas"

There is no wrong way to play the Storytelling Challenge game. Encourage kids to pick words beyond "a, an, the..." and to experiment with words. Keep it light and fun!

Peek-a-boo

This game is a great way to help your baby learn about object permanence (the idea that people and items still exist even when you cannot see them) and stimulate their senses while you spend quality time together. To play this game, pick a time when your child is well-rested and fed.

Cover your face with your hand, then quickly move your hand away and say “Peek-a-Boo!” Babies love being surprised.

Tip: Make sure to cover your face—and not theirs—so that you do not scare them while you play. When you pop out, they will see that your smiling face is still there.

Tip: As your baby gets older, try holding a blanket between the two of you instead of your hands so they can experiment with their body by reaching for the blanket. This will allow them to learn how the movements of their body can affect the things around them.

Let's Look at This.

Pick items from throughout your home that will be fun for your baby to hold: eggbeaters, books, colorful fabrics, bells, etc. Anything that won't hurt them is fair game. When holding objects in front of your baby, stare at it as if you are interested as well. All of these objects may be ordinary to you but are new and interesting to your baby. Talk with your baby about each item: what it is called, what it is used for, how it feels—these are all ways to introduce new words and ideas to baby. Don't forget to use items with and in front of your baby as well!

Tip: By introducing these new objects to your child, you may be giving them the experience of a new sound, texture, taste, or even sight. All of these things can help contribute to their understanding of the world as they come in contact with more objects.

Tummy Time

Tummy time is important for any baby to grow strong and develop their core muscles. Babies who start out on their tummies can learn how to push up, roll over, sit up, and crawl. While your baby is laying on their tummy, try to keep them company by laying on your tummy as well. Make faces, play peek-a-boo, or talk with them.



Tip: Babies love to look at faces, especially yours! They will focus on faces longer than anything else. By four or five months old, they are able to distinguish between different expressions on faces—anger, boredom, happiness. Take this tummy time to help them see the similarities and differences in facial expressions.

Chatterbox

Have a conversation with your baby! Your baby loves interacting with you. Although your baby may not know words, their coos, gurgles, and grunts are still forms of communication, so when your baby becomes more vocal, start talking back to them and repeating the sounds they make.

Tip: Taking the time to stretch out the sounds in the words that your baby makes can help them hear the letters. Encouraging your baby to mimic the sounds you make will also help them in understanding and forming new words.



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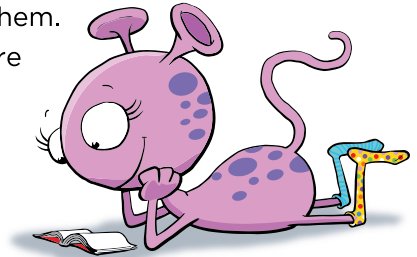
Early Literacy Initiative



You Are Your Child's Teacher From the Moment They Are Born.

During this time, they learn because you are talking, singing, writing, reading stories, and playing with them.

Mid-Continent Public Library is here to provide parents with support, programs, and resources to make sure their children are reading at grade level by third grade.

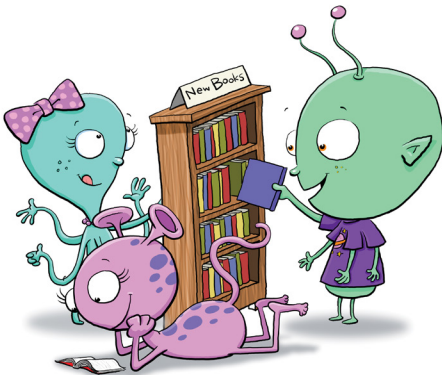


Join Us for Early Literacy Storytimes

Bring your baby, toddler, or preschooler to an early literacy storytime, led by one of our MCPL storytime experts. You'll learn techniques and activities to encourage those first steps toward reading as you share picture books, music, fingerplays, movement activities, and more. To find a storytime near you, call your local MCPL branch or visit mymcpl.org/storytimes.

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