

Language & Cognitive Development

What is it? Language and cognitive development includes word and number recognition, counting and memory, as well as advanced literacy skills like reading and writing.

Why is it important? Children who enjoy stories and being read to, and whose cognitive development is appropriate to their age and stage, are children who are prepared to learn and succeed—at school and throughout life.



Read to your child

- Making books, stories and storytelling a part of your child's daily routine will encourage his or her love of literacy and build communication skills.
- Story time isn't just for bedtime. There are many chances to encourage reading throughout the day. From reading cereal boxes at the kitchen table, to making a grocery list together—all help to encourage a love of reading.



Use rhymes, games and songs

- Rhymes and songs are fun for you and your child, but they also build your child's understanding of and appreciation for language—how it works and how it's used.
- Not only that, but children learn lots of new words through songs, rhymes, riddles and chants.

Language & Cognitive Development



Talk about what's happening

- When we talk, we describe what's going on around us and help put names to the things we see and experience.
- Make conversation with your child an important part of every day. Remember: your child learns about language by watching and imitating you.



Play, play, play!

- Play is children's work—it is how they build their brains and learn about the world we live in.
- Every time your child is playing with you, he or she is exploring the world with his or her senses and learning how things work.



Language & Cognitive Development



Use daily routines as opportunities to learn

- Cooking provides opportunities to measure and count.
- A trip to the grocery store creates opportunities to develop language, communication and decision-making skills.
- Making your child an important part of your everyday activities makes learning fun!



Limit computer and television

- Young children's brains are hardwired to learn through doing. That is why exploratory experiences are so much better for their cognitive and language skills than passive experiences like watching TV or playing on a computer.
- Limit television and computer time, and look for ways to engage the whole family in activities like board games, creative play, and family literacy programs in the community.

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From your child's first day, open up his or her world to language and a love of learning

- Walk around your home with your child pausing to look at things. Name the items you see. This supports vocabulary development.
- Play "Five Little Piggies Finger Grab": Recite the nursery rhyme while touching each of your baby's fingers in turn. Then let your baby grab your fingers as you say the rhyme again.
- Have fun playing "What Sound Does the Animal Make?": Cut out pictures of various well-known animals. Ask the question, "What sound does a make?" and then answer by making the sound.

Making crafts is an opportunity to learn about the world

- Work with your child to make a scrapbook of all her or his favourite things and people, then talk about it with your child. You can label some of the people and things.
- Make a collage using stickers and whatever craft supplies you have on hand. Together with your child, sort and count the various craft items (e.g., pipe cleaners) while working on your project. When it's done, give the masterpiece a title.



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