

Building Blocks of Literacy Comprehension: A Home-Based Approach

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Your child can develop listening and pre-reading comprehension skills from birth! Set them up for success by using natural and developmentally appropriate activities based on LSL strategies.

During your baby's first year of life, try these activities related to the milestones on the left to promote comprehension skills that will help them be ready to read when they're older.

0 – 1 2 Months

Vocabulary

- Babbles (3-6m)
- Looks at what an adult is pointing to on a page (9-12m)
- Makes connections between pictures and objects (12 m)
- Recognizes the names of common objects & family members (6-12m)

- Wear hearing devices during all waking hours and consider using a remote mic/FM system.
- Play imitation games with your baby. Imitate what they say. See if they will imitate what you say.
- Point out objects, actions, and emotions in pictures. Use **auditory first** to talk about what you are going to point to before you point to it.
- Use words over and over in meaningful contexts, (**auditory bombardment**). Make the target word stand out by using **acoustic highlighting** (e.g., Where's ... *mom*? I see *mom*. *Mooom* is in the kitchen.).

Background Knowledge

- Experiments with cause and effect (3-6m)
- Starts to understand object permanence (9-12m)
- Makes connections between familiar songs and routines (0-12m)

- Sing during routines. Make up songs for everything.
- Read a variety of books-relate them to real world experiences (e.g., Look at those horses. Remember when we went to the farm and saw horses.).
- Go on field trips and walks. Use **parallel talk** to label and talk about what you see (e.g., Look there's a dog. That dog is a Golden Retriever. He is big and hairy.).
- Play peek-a-boo with a small blanket. Cover your face and say, "Where's mom?" Pull the blanket off and say, "Here's mom!" or "It's mom!"
- Hide toys under a small blanket or towel. Use where questions to ask about what is hidden. Similar to peek-a-boo (e.g., Where's the dog?).

Listening Skills

- Searches for sound (3-6m)
- Responds to name (9-12m)
- Responds to simple commands (12m)
- Responds to simple questions (12 m)

- Label sounds and point out where they are coming from.
- Play hide and seek. Whoever is hiding can say the child's name. Help your child search for the voice.
- Give simple commands without visual cues (e.g., Give me five. Find your shoes.). Give your child plenty of **wait time** to carry out what you asked.
- Use an **auditory sandwich** to help your child with directions: say it, show it, say it (e.g, Get your shoes. (pause) Say it again and point in the direction of the shoes. Follow it up with an **auditory only statement**. You found your shoes.).

Milestones were taken from Cochlear America, (2017). The Integrated Scales of Development from Listen Learn and Talk. Cochlear AG European Headquarters. Retrieved February 16, 2025, from <https://assets.cochlear.com/api/public/content/e82f3e7aaade4920957ab3f936dfe1b77?e=8411f475> and Wilkes, Elizabeth M., (1999). The Cottage Acquisition Scales for Listening Language and Speech. Sunrise Cottage School for Deaf Children
LSL strategies from 6-Macliver-Lux, K., Rosenzweig, E., & Estabrooks, W. (2020). Chapter 15. In *Strategies for Developing Listening, Talking, and Thinking in Auditory-Verbal Therapy* (pp. 521-561). essay, Plural Publishing Inc. Fickenscher, S., Gaffney, E., & Dickenson, C. L. (2016). *Auditory verbal strategies to build listening and spoken language* [PDF]. Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License.

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1 2 – 2 4 Months

Vocabulary

- Understands 50 words (15-18m)
- Uses 150-300 words (21-24m)
- Uses longer utterances to express intentions (21-24m)
- Understands 250-500 words (21-24m)

- Use a variety of words for one object or idea (e.g., shoe/sandal, small/tiny). Sandwich the new word between the familiar word (e.g., The baby is so small. She is tiny. She is small.).
- **Expand** on your child's utterances. If they say one word, you can add a word to what they say (e.g., Child: banana You: yellow banana or yummy banana.).
- When the child is frustrated or mad give them words to help them understand their feelings.
- Continue to use **auditory bombardment** and **acoustic highlighting**. Use it with a variety of words including verbs, descriptors, and prepositions.

Background Knowledge

- Associates familiar phrases with familiar stories (12-24m)
- Relates books to the real world (12-24m)
- Points and asks "What's that?" (12-24m)
- Acts out familiar situations (18-24m)

- Read books with repeatable lines. Use **auditory closure** while reading by pausing and letting the child finish the familiar phrase.
- Help your child make connections between things they have seen and experience in real life with what they see in books (e.g., The girl is going to the store. Remember when we went to the store.).
- Pretend play with your child. Act out different activities your child likes to do or has done. You can use dolls, puppets, or family members.
- Pick out books that build on your child's interest or recent experiences.

Listening Skills

- Follows 1-step (12-15m) and 2-step (21-24m) directions
- Discriminates nursery rhymes or songs (12-24m)
- Finds an item, item + descriptor, item+ action, item + location in books and pictures (12-24m)

- Practice following one and two step directions during daily routines, when getting dressed, picking up toys, or getting ready for bed. Ask your child to bring you two things, pick up two things or remember something with more than one descriptor. Use an **auditory sandwich** (e.g., say it, show it, say it).
- Read a variety of nursery rhymes and sing a variety of songs. Use **auditory closure** during the songs. Pause and let your child fill in the next word or phrase.
- Describe everything - how it feels, where it is, what it looks like. Use **expansion**, **auditory bombardment** and **acoustic highlighting** to help your child listen for different elements.

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24 – 36 Months

Vocabulary

- Answers some "wh" questions (24-36m)
- Labels a variety of pictures (24-36m)
- Understands some emotions words – points them out in pictures (24-36 m)
- Uses 500 words inc. nouns, verbs, pronouns, prepositions (31-36 m)

- When the child is frustrated or mad give them words to help them understand their feelings.
- Continue to use **expansion** with the words and phrases they say by turning what they say into a complete sentence (e.g., child: big ball. You: I want the big blue ball.).
- Ask a variety of "wh" questions while reading. Try not to use "What's that?" Instead use, "Where is ____? What do you see? Who is ____?" What happened?"
- Increase the number of specific words you use. Instead of saying tiger, say Siberian tiger. Continue to use a **vocabulary sandwich** with new words.

Background Knowledge

- Makes associations across books (24-36m)
- Role plays with peers (30-36m)
- Continues to expand concept development (31-36 m)
- Retells or relates recent experiences (31-36 m)

- Read a variety of books and relate them to real world experiences (**connecting the familiar to the unfamiliar**).
- Link books together. Point out similarities and differences.
- Give your child opportunities for dramatic play with different scenarios (e.g., housekeeping, grocery shopping, going to the doctor).
- Encourage your child to retell events that happened during the day to other family members and caregivers.

Listening Skills

- Recognizes when adult shortens or changes a familiar story or song (24-36m)
- Follows two-three step directions with two critical elements (30-36m)
- Understands complex language and commands (24-36m)

- Use **sabotage** to create a silly story or situation to help your child listen intentionally and use language to reconcile the difference between what they hear and what they know.
- Make up different endings for familiar stories.
- Continue to give directions during daily routines using an **auditory sandwich**. Increase the number of steps or number of things your child needs to remember.
- Read stories that are longer in length.
- Use phrases that identify which one (e.g., the one with a pink bow, the girl with pink socks, the one under the table).

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