Reading aloud, singing, doing fingerplays and engaging young children in conversation are all ways that parents and caregivers lay the foundation for young children to become successful readers and writers. The following activities were created to promote literacy with young children through hands-on, real-life experiences that will stimulate learning.

Have fun and “Grow a Reader!”

**SPLISH SPLASH**

- Children will enjoy washing waterproof baby dolls in baby bathtubs (large dishpans or plastic storage containers will also work as bathtubs). Gather items for bathing infants for the children to use: washcloths, hooded towels and empty containers of shampoo.
- Use a squirt of baby shampoo to make a bubble bath if desired.

**BABY BOTTLE AND PACIFIER ART**

Fill baby bottles with water and add a few drops of different colors of food coloring to each bottle until desired colors are reached. Children can squeeze bottles to squirt water onto absorbent paper. (e.g. coffee filters, changing table paper, paper towels, or construction paper.)

Old pacifiers can be dipped in tempera paint and then used as a stamp or brush to create a picture.
BEAUTIFUL DREAMER
Gather enough baby dolls and a newborn disposable diaper for each child. Show the children how to diaper a baby and then help them put a diaper on their doll. Rock the dolls to sleep while singing “Rock a Bye Baby.”

Rock a Bye Baby
Rock a bye baby, in the tree top.
When the wind blows the cradle will rock.
When the bough breaks the cradle will fall.
And down will come baby, cradle and all!

YUM, YUM*
- Make baby food by pureeing fruits or vegetables in a blender or food processor. (You may need to add some water.)
- Talk about why babies need their food pureed.
- Have a taste test! Choose several different types of baby food (homemade or store bought) and their corresponding regular foods, such as carrots/carrot sticks, applesauce/apples, mashed bananas/whole bananas. Children can taste a sample of each type and then vote on whether they liked the baby or regular food best.
- You may also want to make a chart to show the children’s favorite foods.

* All cooking projects require adult supervision.

STORY TIME
- Check out board books for the children to use to “read” to their baby dolls. Try to find familiar stories so that the children can retell the story.
- Encourage the children to choose a special place to “read” to their doll.
BABY STUFF

Gather a variety of baby items. Talk about the different things a baby uses by showing each item. (Examples: pacifier, baby bottle, rattle, lotion, spoon, onesie, tiny diaper, teething ring, nose aspirator, bib, washcloth).

After talking about each item, play “What’s Missing?” game.

- Set out each item on the table or floor in front of the children. Ask them to study the objects.
- Cover the objects with a blanket and then use the blanket to pick up and remove one object from the set.
- Ask children to touch their noses when they think they know which object is missing. Once all the children have been given time to think, call on a child to reveal the missing object.
- Add to the number of items if children can easily guess the missing objects.

BABY STUFF VS. KID STUFF

Collect items that a young child would use that a baby could not, e.g. scissors, marker, fork, cup, toothbrush, picture book, CD, etc. Use the baby items from the previous activity along with these collected “kid” items and help the children sort all of the items into two groups: things a baby would use and things a child would use.

Discuss why babies can’t use the things that an older child could.
Bring books to life with these simple ideas that highlight early literacy skills.

**How Do You Make A Baby Smile?**
By Philemon Sturges

**Presentation Notes:** Parents and baby animals laugh and play in this bright and colorful story. Try singing the text to the tune of “Do You Know the Muffin Man?” Repeat the first line and/or point out rhyming words. Invite children to join in on the action and ask for suggestions for how to do things such as “make a face like Mama Baboon.”

**Skills Featured:** Vocabulary, Phonological Awareness

**What Shall We Do With the Boo-Hoo Baby?**
By Cressida Cowell

**Presentation Notes:** The animals in this story all have ideas about how to soothe the crying baby. Before reading, ask children what they would do with a boo-hoo baby; what do they think the baby wants? Before you begin, talk about the wordless page where duck tries to offer the baby a toy. Point to the words “boo-hoo-hoo!” and invite children to say the words with you. Quiet your voice when the baby and the animals go to sleep and invite the children to pretend to sleep also.

**Skills featured:** Print Awareness, Narrative, Print Motivation

**Babies Can’t Eat Kimchee!** By Nancy Patz and Susan Roth

**Presentation Notes:** A young girl talks about all the things her baby sister can’t do…yet. Talk to the children about what they can do that babies cannot. Introduce the Korean word “kimchee.” Tasting kimchee would bring that word to life!

**Skills Featured:** Narrative, Print Motivation, Vocabulary

**Everywhere Babies** By Susan Meyers

**Presentation Notes:** Baby’s first year is very busy. This book’s charming, multicultural illustrations and rhyming descriptions show a variety of things babies do every day. Talk about new vocabulary. Help children remember words to “Pat-a-Cake” and “This Little Piggy”. Encourage them to try these games with young siblings or their baby dolls!

**Skills Featured:** Vocabulary, Phonological Awareness
**Presentation Notes:** Peter has a new baby sister which means that things are changing at his house. Talk to the children about changes they’ve experienced. Ask the children how they think Peter is feeling in this story and why he acts the way he does. As an extension activity, invite children to find something at home from when they were a baby that they could donate to a family in need or an organization that works with these families.

**Skill Featured:** Narrative

**Baby Can’t Sleep** By Lisa Schroeder

**Presentation Notes:** Tired Daddy decides to try counting sheep in order to get his baby to fall asleep in this delightful story. Before reading, ask children to make suggestions about what to do to get a baby to fall asleep. As you read the rhyming text, leave off the rhyming word at the end of each couplet for the children to complete. This book also makes a great introduction to the “Beautiful Dreamer” activity.

**Skills Featured:** Phonological Awareness, Narrative

---

**MORE GREAT BOOKS**

- **This is the Way a Baby Rides** by Susan Meyers
- **What’s in Baby’s Morning?** by Judy Hindley
- **Where is Baby’s Belly Button** by Karen Katz
- **Shoe Baby** by Joyce Dunbar
- **Baby Danced the Polka** by Karen Beaumont