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!”**

**NUMBER MATCH**

Collect a variety of plastic bottles and containers that have a recycling symbol (a single digit from 1-7 surrounded by a triangle of arrows). Have children look at various bottles to find the symbol codes. Write the numerals 1-7 on separate pieces of paper. Children can sort the bottles by matching numbers on the symbol codes with numerals. An easier variation would be to use just two numbers and bottles and containers that have the two matching numbers.

Recycling information related to this activity:

**Number 1 plastics** are easiest to recycle (soda and water bottle containers). They can be used to make fiberfill for coats, sleeping bags, and life jackets. They are also used to make tennis ball felt, combs, new bottles, furniture and sails for boats.

**Number 2 plastics** (milk, shampoo and oil containers) can be remade into toys, pipes, plastic lumber, and rope.

**Plastics 3** (shower curtains, baby bottle nipples), **4** (sandwich bag and plastic wrap), and **5** (Tupperware) have low rates of recyclability.

**Plastic 6** (styrofoam) can be reprocessed into cassette tapes and foam insulation.

**Plastic 7** most difficult to recycle. Made of combinations of plastics.

**MAKE A “GREEN” BAG**

- Talk about the value of using bags more than once.
- Provide children with a sturdy paper bag (preferably with handles such as shopping bags) or a cloth bag with handles (these can be purchased inexpensively at craft stores). Paper bags can be decorated with markers or crayons. Fabric markers and paint can be used on cloth bags.
- Encourage children to try to reuse their bags as many times as they can. Have them talk about and share the different ways they used their bags.
RECYCLED MATERIALS FOR ART

- Use old paper bags and cardboard squares from pizza and other cardboard boxes for drawing and painting activities. Save scrap paper in a special box for recycled art projects.

- Collage materials can be glued onto used CDs. Use them to draw perfect circles for your artwork. Decorated CDs can be hung from the ceiling as mobiles.

- Styrofoam meat trays, individual applesauce containers, yogurt containers and jars of different sizes can all be used as paint, glue and water containers for art projects.

- Old sponges can be cut up into smaller pieces and used to dip into paint to make unusual prints. Save old toothbrushes and combs to use for painting.

MAKING MUSIC!

Have fun making your own tambourine and other musical instruments. Children can play along with their favorite song

For a homemade tambourine you will need:

2 Styrofoam or paper plates, large dried beans (any kind), stapler, markers

1. Place one plate face up on the table.
2. Fill the plate with a small handful of dried beans.
3. Turn the other plate upside down, and put it on top of the plate with the beans.
4. Staple the edges together. Be careful not to leave any large gaps where the beans can fall through.
5. Decorate the tambourine using markers, crayons or paint. You could also add stickers, feathers or decorations.

CREATIVE CARDBOARD BOXES

- Provide each child with a cardboard box, big enough to sit in. Brainstorm ideas for what the box could be made into. Demonstrate that the box can be positioned upside down, on end, open or turned over. Could it be a car, fort, house, umbrella, hat, robot, garage, castle, doll house, telephone booth, bookshelf, boat, reading chair, pet carrier, tool chest, picture frame?

- Offer to cut windows, doors, coin slots, air holes, buttons, skylights…whatever children need for their creations.

- Provide markers, paint, glue, paper, cardboard and whatever other art supplies they need to make their cardboard box creations.

- A large appliance box can be used for a group project. Shoe boxes can be used for individual projects.
RECYCLING IDEAS FOR FUN

- Children can help crush plastic bottles and jugs and flatten boxes using their hands and feet. What a great activity for energetic children!

- **Egg cartons** can be used for sorting activities, small gardens, treasure boxes and art activities.

- **Cardboard tubes** can be used to make musical instruments, binoculars, stick horses, rattles, marble mazes and maracas.

- Use **comics, children’s art, grocery bags, junk mail, and catalogs** for wrapping paper.

- **Cans** (juice, coffee, etc.) can be used as stacking and nesting toys, drums, stilts, wind chimes and piggy banks.

- Use **paper towel and toilet paper tubes** to make shaker musical instruments.

LANDFILLS

- Ask children where they think garbage goes. Use your own garbage as an example. What if the garbage didn't get emptied (do this as an experiment!)? Talk about garbage trucks and land that gets filled with garbage (thus the word landfill). Talk about the large trucks, backhoes and bulldozers that are used to move and bury garbage at landfills.

- Make your own landfill area. In a sandbox, dirt pile or dishpan full of dirt put small, cut up pieces of trash such as aluminum, plastic, and Styrofoam. Add the toy trucks and tractors provided in the kit for children to move and bury the trash.

- Just like garbage cans, landfills can get too full. Ask children what they think might happen?

- Spread newspapers on the floor. Provide children with gloves and inspect your own trash. See if you can find items that can be recycled to reduce the amount of waste that goes into a landfill.

WHAT TO DO WITH THAT OLD EGG CARTON?

**Egg carton counting:**
You will need: egg carton, beads or beans.

1. Place a number of beads or beans in the carton.
2. Close and shake carton.
3. Help children count the number of beads/beans in each cup.

**Art Palette:** Egg cartons make great art palettes for paints. Place separate colors into each cup. The inside of the egg carton lid can be used as a surface to mix your own colors.
LITTER HOKEY POKEY

Give each child a bag (plastic grocery bags with handles work well) and four pieces of identical litter (for example: a can, a straw, a paper towel, and a food wrapper, ). Start with the litter on the floor in front of each child holding his/her bag. Sing the following song using a different piece of litter for each verse, to the tune of the Hokey Pokey.

Put the can in, Take the can out.
Put the can in, then you shake it all about.
You clean up all the litter then you turn yourself about.
That’s what it’s all about.

Continue singing a verse for each piece of trash until each item has been put into the bag.

For the final verse, have children

Put your litter bag in. Take your litter bag out.
Put your litter bag in, then you shake it all about.
You clean up all the litter then you turn yourself around.
That’s what it’s all about.

RECYCLE PAIRS

Collect some of the following items and spread them randomly on the floor in a circle. Have children try to find pairs. Talk about which items can and can’t be reused.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recyclable items</th>
<th>Disposable items</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>cloth diaper</td>
<td>disposable diaper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>plastic plate</td>
<td>paper plate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wrapping paper</td>
<td>gift bag</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>stainless steel water bottle</td>
<td>disposable water bottle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>plastic bag</td>
<td>cloth bag</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>handkerchief</td>
<td>tissue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>work glove</td>
<td>disposable glove</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>paper towel</td>
<td>cloth towel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wooden chopsticks</td>
<td>plastic chopsticks</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LITTER HUNT

Materials:
Garbage bags
Heavy gloves
Newspapers

Talk to children about litter and where it might be found.
Take children on a litter hunt. Provide them with bags and heavy gloves. Talk to children about safety emphasizing that gloves must be used. Litter hunting hats can be made from recycled newspapers. (see instructions on following page)

After the hunt, empty litter bags onto newspapers. Talk about the trash that was collected. Who might have left it? Could anything be recycled? How should it be properly disposed of? Trash items can be used for counting and sorting.

LITTER HUNTING HAT

Start with a piece of newspaper.
Fold the sheet of paper in half.
Fold the top corners down towards the center of the page.
Your paper should look like this.
Lift the front bottom flap.
Flip the paper over, then lift the bottom flap and fold it up.
Your litter hunting hat is complete!
Bring books to life with these simple ideas that highlight early literacy skills.

**I Stink** by Kate and Jim McMullan

**Presentation Notes:** A garbage truck’s day starts early, but he’s got a lot to do! Have fun reading with lots of expression and sound effects. After reading about garbage alphabet soup, invite children to suggest some stinky items of their own and get ready for some gross and silly answers.

**Skills Featured:** Print Motivation, Letter Recognition, Narrative

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**Joseph Had a Little Overcoat** by Sims Taback

**Presentation Notes:** A traditional folk tale is combined with an innovative die cut format in this Caldecott winner. Have children join in on the refrain “it was old and worn.” Perfect for retelling, make pieces of clothing for sequencing activities. After sharing, talk about the expression “turning trash into treasure.” Follow up with a recycle craft.

**Skills Featured:** Narrative, Print Motivation

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**Not a Box** by Antoinette Portis

**Presentation Notes:** Rabbit uses his imagination to turn an ordinary box into countless toys and hours of fun, all while insisting that it is “not a box.” Encourage participation by inviting children to join in on the refrain and ask them to tell you what the rabbit has created. Follow up with some creative play with boxes.

**Skills Featured:** Print Motivation, Narrative

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**Recycle** by Gail Gibbons

**Presentation Notes:** Non-fiction books like this one are terrific for introducing new vocabulary. Instead of reading it cover to cover, share bits and pieces as they tie in to your projects. Read the definition of recycling aloud to introduce this unit or use the ideas in the back of the book to inspire activities for the group. Allow children to share their own ideas about recycling.

**Skills Featured:** Vocabulary
**An Earthworm's Life by John Himmelman**

**Presentation Notes:** Get up close with an earthworm and learn about its role as nature’s recycler in this terrific beginning science book. Share new vocabulary with the children such as the terms mentioned in the glossary. Search for a live earthworm outside to observe.

**Skills Featured:** Vocabulary, Print Motivation

**MORE GREAT BOOKS!**

- Smash, Mash, Crash There Goes the Trash by Barbara Odanaka
- Trashy Town by Andrea Zimmerman
- Respecting Our World by Susan Barraclough
- Estela's Swap by Alexis O'Neill
- The Trip by Ezra Jack Keats
- Not a Stick by Antoinette Portis
- Recycle Every Day! By Nancy Elizabeth Wallace