

Word Play

Relevant Satellite Accreditation Standards

IV. Supporting Children's Development

G. The provider ensures that children hear language around them and engage in a wide range of early language and literacy experiences.

4. The provider plays with words and language with infants, toddlers, and preschoolers.



The Basics

Word play is auditory and visual experience with the sounds and rhythm of language. Adults play a key role in supporting children's development beginning at birth by providing rich experiences with oral and written language. Reading, rhyming, singing, and conversational talking in playful ways helps children build brain connections and recognize various components of language.

Why is word play important? Play with the sounds and rhythm of language is essential for young children's phonological awareness, the ability to identify individual sounds that make up words in spoken language. In playing with language and words, children learn to identify...

- words: individual units of language, examples include flower, baby, cat, and plate.
- syllables: individual units of a word, examples include /flow/-/er/ and /ba/-/by/.
- onset/rimes: individual components of a syllable, examples include /c/-/at/ and /pl/-/ate/.
- phonemes: individual units of sound, examples include /p/, /b/, and /ă/.

Phonological awareness is necessary to learn to read and spell. Evidence shows proficiency when entering kindergarten is a strong predictor of long-term reading and spelling success. It supports sound/symbol correspondence (the relationship between letters and sounds) and vocabulary acquisition (the process of learning new words).

How can I incorporate more word play?

- Read aloud every day. Choose literature that is interesting and rhythmic and repeat familiar books.
- Point out similarities and differences among words. “Book and baby begin the same. Do you hear that? /b/-/ook/ and /b/-/aby/. What else starts with /b/?”
- Play word games. “I’m thinking of an animal that starts with /c/.”
- Sing songs and chant nursery rhymes. “One, two, buckle my shoe. Three, four, shut the door...”
- Practice blending and segmenting words. “I am looking for /So/-/fi/-/a/. Who am I looking for?”

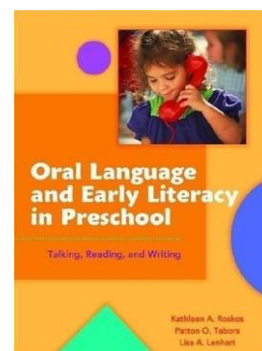
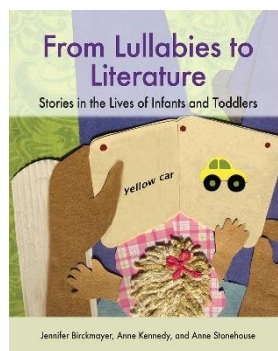
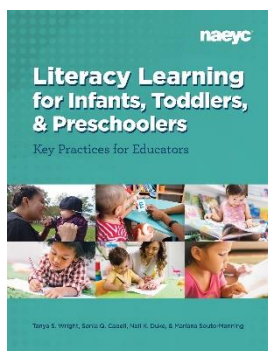
I want to learn more!

- [Word Play Throughout the Day: Phonological Awareness in the Preschool Classroom](#)
- [Word Games to Play with Kids](#)
- [Word Play All Day – Early Literacy in Action](#)
- [Kindergarten Predictors of Second vs. Eighth Grade Reading Comprehension Impairments](#)
- [Read Aloud with Children of All Ages](#)

Books available through Satellite’s lending library:

(for Satellite participating programs only)

- *Literacy Learning for Infants, Toddlers, and Preschoolers: Key Practices for Educators* (Wright et al., 2022)
- *From Lullabies to Literature: Stories in the Lives of Infants and Toddlers* (Birckmayer, Kennedy, & Stonehouse, 2008)
- *Oral Language and Early Literacy in Preschool: Talking, Reading, and Writing* (Roskos, Tabors, & Lenhart, 2004)



This resource is available to you through Satellite Family Child Care System, a YoungStar Connect Partner.