Language and literacy skills are skills we use to express thoughts with written or spoken words. Help your child learn proper English by speaking in complete sentences as much as possible. Carry on conversations about the activities you like to do. Increase your child’s vocabulary by reading a wide variety of stories and going to new places such as a park or beach, a new store or restaurant, the zoo or a museum. Knowing letters and the sounds they represent are important, but other literacy skills are important, too.

Here are some activities for you and your child that will help build broad-based literacy and language skills:

- “Read” signs in your neighborhood. Traffic signs and store or restaurant logos are examples of print materials in your neighborhood that your child may recognize and point out to you.
- Write your child’s name on the inside tag of clothes. Help your child learn to distinguish his or her name from the names of other family members.
- Point out the name of the author and illustrator when you read a story to your child. Try writing and illustrating together a story of your own.
- Let your child help you make a grocery list. Cut out from newspaper circulars pictures that represent a few of the items on your list. Let your child “read” the pictures to you when you are in the store. If possible, show your child how to check off the items you have purchased. Ask your child, “Can you remember three items we bought?”
- When you empty the dishwasher, let your child sort the flatware into groups of dinner forks, salad forks, soupspoons, and teaspoons. This skill is similar to distinguishing between the shapes of different letters.
- Point out and name different shapes you encounter in your everyday activities. Focus on one shape at a time. For example, look for things that are circles, and point out tires, drawer pulls, buttons, and bottle caps as examples of circles.
- Point out alphabet letters in familiar signs and labels.
- Draw on the sidewalk with chalk.
- Make sounds that are in the stories you read together, such as wind, animals, and mechanical sounds. Change your voice to represent different characters.
- Memorize nursery rhymes and songs together.
- Leave out words or phrases from a story or rhyme and see if your child can remember them. You can fill in for your child if help is needed.