

FIVE WAYS TO KINDLE AN INTEREST IN READING

USE PRINT IN THE ENVIRONMENT TO BRIDGE THE CONNECTION BETWEEN LETTERS AND READING.

Books are not the only means for children to learn to read. Apart from the preschool classroom, opportunities are everywhere in both the home and outdoor environment, where children can interact with letters and words. Encountering letters and words in a meaningful and enjoyable context stimulates children's interest and promotes the development of literacy skills. Here are some ways parents can use print in the environment to engage children.



1 FIND WORDS ON THE GO

Playing word games on a bus or car ride is a fun way to spend the time and keeps boredom at bay, especially on long commutes. Get your child to look out the window and call out the names of objects which begin with a specific letter, or try to spot specific letters on licence plates, road signs or bus ads. Keep score and see how many he can find before reaching the destination.

2 READ THE MENU TOGETHER

Look at the menu together. Reiterate your child's choice by pointing to the item and saying it out loud. Ask him what letter the word starts with and identify other dishes with the same letter. If it is pizza, spend a few moments reading aloud the different pizzas and ingredients, for your child to make his choice. Have fun creating your own menus at home for different events such as picnics, a weekend lunch or a birthday celebration.



3 GO ON AN ABC SCAVENGER HUNT

Get your child to name objects he sees during a walk in the neighbourhood or park. Ask him what letter they start with, such as "A" for "ants" or "B" for "bench". Take turns. Make it a fun challenge: get all 26 letters of the alphabet, find objects that start with the same letter, and so on. This activity also scores bonus points for encouraging children to pay close attention to their environment.



4 SCRIBBLE ON SAND

At the playground sandpit or beach, use a branch or your fingers to write (letters of the alphabet, your child's name, days of the week, rhyming words, etc.) and have your child mimic your strokes or trace the letters with his fingers. Sand has a tactile quality which children love, and this sensory activity also aids learning retention.



5 FILL YOUR HOME WITH LETTER FORMS

To nurture pre-reading skills like letter recognition in very young children whose motor skills may not be developed enough to grip a pencil, provide letter forms in the shape of fridge magnets, food and cookie cutters. Let them arrange and rearrange letter fridge magnets to form simple words. Ask them to pick out specific letters in a bowl of alphabet pasta or crackers. Press out letters in play dough with letter-shaped cookie cutters. Create a sensorial experience for children to learn through hands-on activities.