

# EARLY LEARNING

FROM YOUR CHILD'S BIRTH UNTIL THEY START SCHOOL

Young children are readers,  
writers and mathematicians

Reading, writing and using mathematics are part of everyday life. Being a successful reader, writer and mathematician starts right from birth. Young children are learning about reading, writing and mathematics through everything they see and do.

Parents, family and whānau are an important part of children's learning. There are many different ways you can help your child grow a love for reading, writing and mathematics in the early years.

Growing your young child's love of learning can be shared and enjoyed by parents, families, whānau and communities.



Talk with your child from a very young age, it's great for their learning. (Use the language that works best for you and your child.)



MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

Te Tāhuhu o te Mātauranga

# Growing a love for Reading

**Talk, sing and play with your young child to help them learn about language. Make it fun!**

Learning about language helps your young child learn about reading. All language experiences help children to build connections in their brain. These connections help your young child learn to understand and speak their language and this provides a foundation for ongoing learning.

Learning in the early years often happens through play – make play fun and, whenever you can, make it something you do together.

- ✿ Rock your baby in rhythm, sing songs and oriori (lullabies), and say rhymes to them.
- ✿ Use your tone of voice to make it fun by repeating their words or sounds.
- ✿ Talk with your child all the time – not just instructions, but chat about their day. Ask questions, talk about your thoughts, describe what is happening and encourage your child to do the same.
- ✿ Tell them stories of your childhood, your family and your whakapapa (ancestry) and the places that you come from.
- ✿ Play fun word games – Simon Says, I Spy – and rhyme words together.
- ✿ Sing songs and waiata, say poems and rhymes together, make up your own short stories, rhymes and songs about everyday things.



*Spend special time  
together reading – it's great  
for you and your child.*

*Make reading:*

- quiet and relaxing
- a time to sit close to your child
- 10 minutes at least, without interruption
- an enjoyable, interesting and special time.



## **Start reading early with your young child**

In the early years children are learning to 'read' and understand many different written, visual and oral signs and symbols. An important part of this is learning that books, and the words in them, can be fun, amusing, comforting and full of excitement and information. Reading – and being read to – is like unlocking a door to learning. It provides access to just about all other knowledge.

Show your child picture books and read aloud to them from soon after birth. This helps them learn about language and grow a lifelong love of reading. Use lots of different words to describe what you see when you look at books. Use the language that works best for you and your child.

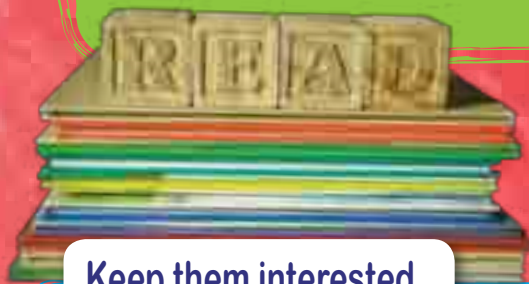
Once your baby can hold objects, give them books made from fabric to play with and don't worry if they put them in their mouths – they learn from doing that, too. Keep talking about the pictures. Babies soon begin to recognise pictures of familiar objects.





## Keep reading together as your child grows

- ✿ Have a regular time for reading together and let your child choose their 'favourites' – they'll enjoy hearing you read them again and again.
- ✿ Stop reading when they have had enough – always make reading a fun family thing to do.
- ✿ Get books from lots of different places; libraries, book fairs, second-hand shops or ask friends or whānau if they have any they no longer need.
- ✿ Show your child how useful reading can be. Look for letters and words everywhere and talk together about them when you find them. Look for signs, place names, instructions for toys and games, text on television, party invitations, maps, bus timetables and junk mail.
- ✿ Be a role model. Let your child see you reading often – newspapers, books, magazines – this helps your child see that reading is important in your family.
- ✿ When a story has repeated words, leave time at the end of the sentence for your child to say the words themselves. Let them add their own words by using the pictures as a guide. Give them time.



## Keep them interested

Children are likely to enjoy reading if it's about a topic that interests them. Encourage your child to talk about what they are interested in and help them to find books or magazines, comics, newspapers or website pages about it.

Some ideas for encouraging your child to learn more about reading are:

- ✿ Take them to the library and help them to choose books themselves.
- ✿ Make a book with your child: help them to cut out favourite pictures from a magazine or use photographs or their drawings to make up a story. Read your special book together. Talk about all the people and places in the pictures.
- ✿ Include your young children in the group when an older child is reading a book from school.

**PAUSE** at places in the story where your child can add their own words. Give them a chance to think.

**TALK** about the picture and about what might happen next.

**PRAISE** their efforts and contributions – whatever they are. Make reading fun.



Help your child to link stories to their own life. Remind them about what they have done when a similar thing happens in the story.

Make your home a place where your child sees that reading is valued and where they learn to love language, storytelling and books – using the language of your family.

# Growing a love for Writing

## Talking, drawing and making marks leads to writing. Make it fun!

In their early years children get better and better at expressing their ideas, thoughts, feelings and experiences in all sorts of ways. Talking and drawing are two of these ways but children are also learning that they can make 'symbols' (marks, letters, words) that other people can 'read.' This is the start of writing!

Writing and reading are linked. When your child succeeds at one, they can do well at the other, too. Writing is something that your child will use for the rest of their life.

Children often start to make marks and to write before they can read written words. There are lots of ways to encourage early writing.

- ✿ Keep pens, felts, crayons, pencils and paper handy for your child.
- ✿ Make letters of the alphabet out of anything, e.g., stones, blocks, buttons, shells, playdough. Bake biscuits in the shape of the letters in your child's name.
- ✿ Get outside and draw and write with mud or chalk on concrete, stick in sand or snow, or a paint brush and water on the deck.
- ✿ Make time for your child to draw and write. Try making patterns, drawing shapes and pictures, and writing letters on steamy mirrors or windows with fingers.
- ✿ Cover your fridge in magnetic letters.
- ✿ Go on a word hunt. Show your child how to form a letter at the beginning of a word they are interested in, then go word hunting in your house or in a book.

Don't worry if your child's letters or words look wrong. The important thing is that they have fun writing and that you praise their efforts.



Be interested in what your child draws and writes. Talk about their drawing and writing. Ask them to tell you about what they are doing. Display their work. Be proud of it. Share it with friends, family and whānau.

## Help your child to learn about writing

- ✿ Say the letters in their name aloud.
- ✿ Get them to 'read' their early writing to you.
- ✿ Write the story they tell you under their drawing.
- ✿ Let them see you writing – talk about what you are writing about.
- ✿ Help your child create a scrapbook with pictures.
- ✿ Look for writing everywhere – street names, shop names, writing on cars and trucks.



Help your child to hear the sounds in the words they say. It will give them a good start. Do this in a fun way, e.g. make rhymes whenever you can. Knowing the sounds that different letters make is an important part of learning to read and write.

## Write to each other

Write notes to your child and leave them in interesting places, like their lunch box or on their pillow. Ask them to draw or write a reply. Email or write to relatives or friends.

- ✿ Put labels on important things, like the door to their room and their toy box. You can write labels in your first language.
- ✿ Have pencils and paper available so they can make their own lists and pictures and letters.
- ✿ Encourage them to draw their own patterns or do writing that they can read to you.
- ✿ Make cards for special occasions, encourage them to write their name.



# Growing a love for Mathematics

## Look for maths everywhere. Make it fun!

Every day young children are finding out about and using mathematical ideas such as counting, measuring, sorting, patterns, numbers, shapes, size and position.

You can support their understanding and confidence with mathematics by helping them to notice patterns, shapes, size, order and numbers wherever you are and by including mathematical ideas in their play, interests and everyday activities.

Having good mathematical skills will help your child in the future. They are important for things like solving problems and creative thinking.



Your child is more likely to value and succeed with mathematics if you talk about and show an interest in it.



## Learning about numbers and counting

It's important your child gets used to numbers because they lead onto most other mathematics skills. Children will often count in order before they understand what the numbers mean.

- Link numbers with objects to show them what 'one', 'two', 'three' or 'five' means. For instance one nose, one mouth, two ears, two legs and five fingers.
- Read stories and rhymes (e.g. Three Blind Mice, Goldilocks and the Three Bears) and sing songs that use numbers.
- Count as you walk or climb up and down steps, do up buttons, lay the table, fill their lunchbox.
- Spot numbers on letterboxes. What number comes next and what number came before?



## Use mathematics for a purpose

Support your child's learning by bringing mathematical ideas into things they already do.

- Talk about shapes at home: a round placemat, an oval frame, a square box. What makes them the same? What makes them different?
- Make smaller groups from a large group of objects, like blocks. Cut an apple into enough pieces for everyone.
- Play games that get children going over, under, through, behind, above.
- Talk about how things are the same or different. Look for the patterns in leaves or on shells. Match things up – socks, pyjama top and bottom, shoes.
- Find out who's taller. Have your child and their friends or family stand back-to-back to see who is taller and who is shorter.
- Work out which lids fit on which saucepans.

## Everyone, every day

The whole family can show your child that mathematics is used every day.

- Cook – measure the ingredients, share food evenly.
- Listen to music – clap, count and sing the rhythm.
- Play sport – add the points and keep the time.
- Shop – count how many cans are in the trolley.
- Build – use building blocks, measure length and height, match size and shape.
- Measure paper to make sure it is big enough to wrap the present.

Build with blocks. Construction helps your child understand about shapes and volume. Your child learns by repetition. The repeated counting they do in everyday life, like setting the table or getting dressed, helps them to understand numbers.



## Learning in early childhood education services

Reading, writing and mathematics are an everyday part of children's experiences in early childhood education services. Children are exploring, experimenting and testing out ideas about reading, writing and mathematics in their early childhood service and at home.

If your child is at an early childhood service, you can help by sharing with the teachers/educators what you have noticed your child doing at home. Ask them what they have noticed and how they are encouraging an interest in learning including reading, writing and mathematics with your child.



## Starting school

When teachers know children well they are better able to support their learning. Getting to know your child is an important first step for the teacher when your child starts school. You can help by talking with the teacher about the things your child enjoys, is excited about and is interested in.

Many teachers appreciate parents sharing their child's portfolio from their early childhood education service. This gives teachers valuable understandings about a child's learning. The information from a child's service can also link up the child's early childhood, home and school experiences. Portfolios can help make starting school easier because your child can share the portfolio with other children and teachers, and it can be read over and over again.

