

# CREATING A READING-RICH ENVIRONMENT AT HOME

There are many easy ways to support reading skills for kids of any age at home – you’re probably already doing many of them! This guide offers suggestions for how to create a reading-rich environment in your home. This looks like reading daily, putting reading materials at eye-level so kids see them and encouraging children to read anywhere and everywhere.



“

*Print-rich environments—which include the presence of such items as magnetic refrigerator letters, posters, writing materials for making lists and memoranda, and newspapers and books in the home, as well as family-child attention to environmental print—have been linked to children’s acquisition of an awareness of print (Goodman, 1986; Harste et al., 1984).*

”



By creating a reading-rich environment at home, you can show your child more and new words. As students repeatedly encounter new words in different contexts, whether print or digital, they build and strengthen their vocabularies over time (Logan et al., 2019). For example, a child that reads 20 minutes daily, about 5 children’s books, learns 1.8 million words per school year (Nagy & Herman, 1987).

The metaphor of a snowball illustrates how book sharing relates to language comprehension: As language develops due to book sharing, children’s interest in books grows, thereby promoting linguistic exchanges with their caregivers that further refine word knowledge, syntax, and other aspects of language (Neuman, 2001; Raikes et al., 2006).

## Tips for Creating a Reading-Rich Environment:

### HANG COLLABORATIVE SPACES FOR INPUT FROM CHILDREN.



- Provide a space (like a white or bulletin board) to share messages back-and-forth. Record stories together, memories of a shared experience, poems, new words, comments, or ideas.
- Install bulletin boards with letters from school, interesting pictures, stories, and schoolwork. Help them add their name and descriptions to their work. Post favorite recipes or relevant calendars.
- At their eye level, hang alphabet and weather charts designed by family members together.
- Create simple surveys for children to respond to such as “What kind of fruit for snack – banana or orange?”
- Co-create chore charts, attendance charts, sign-up sheets, and other opportunities for children to cross off, sign up for jobs, or add their input.

### LABEL ITEMS THAT CHILDREN USE AND WHERE THEY BELONG IN THE HOME.



- Label shelves and items with names and symbols of personal items such as coat, hat, shoes, backpack, and toothbrush.
- Use multilingual signs with home languages and English.

### POST REMINDERS OF WHAT CHILDREN SHOULD DO.



- Add signs near the sink as a reminder of hand washing or tooth brushing procedures.
- Post instructions for pet care.
- Add signs made by children to protect their work such as “Please don’t touch my craft. I’m still working.” Signs should be hung at eye level and with print large enough to see across the room.

### POINT OUT PRINT OR TEXT OUTSIDE THE HOME.



- Draw attention to signs in the street, the grocery store, on businesses, restaurants, signs, menus, and electronic media.

## Additional Resources:

- Literacy at Home: Digital Children’s Reading Initiative: [Literacy at Home: Digital Children’s Reading Initiative | NC DPI](#)
- Fluency Tips for Pre-K: [Fluency for Pre-K | NC DPI](#)
- Reading Rockets: [Literacy-Rich Environments | Reading Rockets](#)
- Video: How to create a literacy rich environment for educators and families <https://youtu.be/2UHiZi8Dsol>

### Sources:

- Goodman, K S. (1986) *What’s whole in whole language?* Portsmouth, NH. Heinemann.
- Harste, J., Woodward, V., & Burke, C. (1984). *Language stories and literacy lessons.* Portsmouth, NH. Heinemann.
- Jessica A. R. Logan, Laura M. Justice, Melike Yumus, Leydi Johana Chaparro-Moreno. When Children Are Not Read to at Home. *Journal of Developmental & Behavioral Pediatrics*, 2019; 1 DOI: 10.1097/DBP.0000000000000657
- Logan, J. A., Justice, L. M., Yumus, M., & Chaparro-Moreno, L. J. (2019). When children are not read to at home: The million word gap. *Journal of Developmental & Behavioral Pediatrics*, 40(5), 383-386.
- Nagy, W. E., & Herman, P. A. (1987). *Breadth and depth of vocabulary knowledge: Implications for acquisition and instruction.* In M. G. McKeown & M. E. Curtis (Eds.), *The nature of vocabulary acquisition* (pp. 19-35). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Neuman, S. B. (2001). Essay Book Reviews: The Role of Knowledge in Early Literacy. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 36(4), 468-475.
- Ohio State University. (2019, April 4). A ‘million word gap’ for children who aren’t read to at home: That’s how many fewer words some may hear by kindergarten. *ScienceDaily*. <https://bit.ly/3ltkLYO>
- Raikes, H., et al. (2006). Mother–child bookreading in low-income families: Correlates and outcomes during the first three years of life. *Child Development*, 77(4), 924-953.

