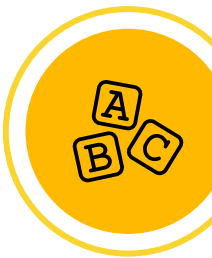




# READING ACTIVITIES

FOR KIDS AND  
CAREGIVERS



**UNITED WAY**  
Southeast Minnesota

# INSTRUCTIONS

Literacy - especially for young children - means more than reading words on a page.

There are many activities caregivers can do with children beyond simply looking at books. This card deck includes several activities related to reading, vocabulary, phonics, emotions, and breathing to try with readers ages 0-5.

Each section is color-coded and has a different icon:



## Reading Activities



## Vocabulary Activities



## Phonics Activities



## Emotions Activities



## Breathing & Self-Regulation Activities

Happy reading!

## Get Cozy

Make a fort or reading nest with blankets and pillows and snuggle in with a few books!

Remember: **early literacy is about much more than just the words on the pages.** Learning how to hold a book, turn the pages, hearing new sounds and how sentences are strung together are all important parts in the development of early literacy skills.



## Make a Prediction

Take a few moments to explore the front and back covers or the first few pages of a book, then encourage your child to talk about what they think might happen in the story they're about to hear.

Older kiddos can also draw or write down their predictions.



# Engage All the Senses

Introducing **sensory books** with different textures is an easy way to engage younger readers.

With slightly older kids, you **can talk about what things smell like, taste like, feel like, look like, or sound like** as you read with your child.

You can also ask them questions about the stories. For example: “Do you think the cookies are warm and gooey? Do you think they smell sweet? I wonder if they sound crunchy..”



# Scavenger Hunt

Using books or printed materials, you and your child can **hunt for a variety of different things**:

- Letters
- Sounds
- Images
- Colors
- Numbers
- Animals
- Something that rhymes with \_\_\_\_\_



# Family Storytelling

Involve the whole family by **telling a story together.**

In one version of this activity, each family member takes turns creating one part of the story at a time. Once one person has finished their short section, they pass it on to the next person to continue the story.

You could also take turns narrating while reading a book.



# Change Up Your Vocabulary

New words are how children learn and expand their vocabulary.

**Changing up the words you regularly use**, slipping in more complex words, and using specifics are all ways of developing a child's vocabulary skills.

For example, you could use specific names instead of general terms:

- Flowers might be tulips, daises, or roses
- Insects might be bees, butterflies, and centipedes
- Rocks might be crystals, stones, or quartz





# Ask Questions

**Asking questions about words** can help kids develop a deeper understanding of their meaning.

For example:

- Have you ever heard this word before?  
When? Where?
- What does this word mean?

Asking a child questions about their day or recent activities can also create opportunities for them to learn and use new words!



# Play What's Another Word for...

Ask your child to come up with **synonyms** for common words. For example:

- Circle = Round
- Cold = Chilly
- Funny = Silly
- Happy = Glad
- Easy = Simple
- Hard = Difficult

You can also explore opposites in the same way by asking a child to identify an **antonym**. For example:

- Cold = Hot
- Low = High
- Far = Close
- Fast = Slow
- Loud = Quiet
- Last = First



# Talk to Your Baby

Long before babies can actually produce words themselves, they can comprehend them, and even respond to them!

**Talk to your baby often - using full sentences** and a variety of words - to **label and describe** what you're doing, seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, sensing, and feeling.





## Make the Connection

Name objects, animals, or things you see in images and books. Then, **when you see them in daily life, point them out** and call them by the same name.

Doing so will help you child begin to make connections between stories and the real world!



## I-Spy with Sounds

Instead of using letters or colors, **ask your child to spot objects that start with a certain sound.** For example, “I spy something that starts with “sh-“

This is a fun activity that can be done while reading or just throughout your day-to-day activities. Consider playing this game on a walk, in the car, or around the house.

If your child is having a hard time, you can give clues to help narrow down the choices: “The object that starts with sh- is good to drink.”



## Rhyme Time

**Encourage your child to come up with or identify rhyming words.** You can also use books for this activity by pointing to different pictures and ask your child for a word that rhymes with each image.

Nursesey rhymes and many kids' books also use rhymes to encourage "reading along" to stories, even at a young age.



# Singalong

Singing is a fun, easy way to begin exposing our littlest ones to language.

You can **mix letters of the alphabet into songs**. For example: “A is for apple. A, a, apple. B is for ball. B, b, ball. C is for cat. C, c, cat.”

This can also be developed as children grow so that they come up with the words to go along with the letters of the alphabet.



## Mix It Up

A simple activity to play with your child involves **swapping out the first letter of a word or sound to create new words.**

For instance, -at could be bat, cat, fat, pat, and sat. -Un could be to bun, fun, and sun.





## Mark the Words

While you're reading, ask your child to **do a movement whenever they hear any words that rhyme.**

For example, ask them to put their hands on their head.



## Naming Emotions

Find an emotions chart online or use an app like the Wheel of Feels.

Reference this chart to

**explore the full spectrum of emotions with your child and practice labeling them**, all while expanding your child's vocabulary!

You can even print off a chart for the fridge or a wall to help you and your child identify which emotion best fits their current feeling. For example, instead of simply using "mad," explore emotions like frustrated, annoyed, hurt, or irritated.



## Identify the Feeling

While reading or watching tv, **talk about the emotions and feelings the characters are experiencing.**

By asking questions like, “How can you tell that they’re feeling [emotion]?”, you can encourage deeper exploration and encourage open communication about the full spectrum of emotions in a neutral way.



## Moving Through

For a child, it can often feel like an emotion is going to last forever. **Helping your child learn to understand and recognize that feelings and emotions are only temporary** can help them to regulate more easily and quickly as they grow and develop.

You can even **try comparing an emotion to something temporary**, like the weather. For example, you might say, “I wonder if we imagine the rain/wind coming down and washing/blowing it away. How does that feel?”



# Separating Feeling from Being

When we discuss our emotions, we often say things like, “I am sad” or “I am frustrated.” But, this might not be the best way to express ourselves.

**Using “I am feeling [emotion]” rather than “I am [emotion]” statements** can help to reframe emotions as things that come and go rather than as part of our identity.



# Recognizing Feelings

With older children, it's possible to have conversations about our emotions.

Even with babies and littles who have not developed language skills, **facial expressions and tone can offer clues about different emotions.**



## What's That Smell?

Asking a child questions like, **“Do you smell that? Is it sweet, or spicy, or stinky?!”** when they're dysregulated can encourage them to take deep breaths through their nose.

Focusing on their sense of smell and their breathing can **bring them out of a stressed or triggered state and recenter them in problem-solving mode** as they try to identify what you're smelling.



## Hot Cocoa Breaths

Guide your child through **imagining holding a mug of hot cocoa.**

**Inhale** the smell of chocolate through your nose. **Relax** as you feel the warmth of the cup. Then, **exhale slowly through the mouth** as if to cool it down.

Be sure to breathe out slow enough that you do not blow the marshmallows off the top of the cocoa!





# Fire Breathing Dragon

When a child is feeling dysregulated or full of “fire,” taking Dragon Breaths can help to release tension and negative energy.

Take a **deep breath in through the nose**, then **slowly exhale through the mouth** while pretending to breathe out all the fire inside. A quiet roar or growl can also be added to the exhale.



## Slowly and Deeply

Tell your child, “Take a deep breath, and let’s **count to 4.**”

As you count up to four, slowly **lower the volume** and **calm the tone** you’re using. This gradual change can encourage relaxation.

