

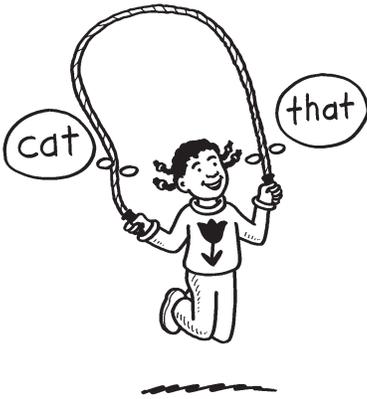
Games to Build Literacy Skills

Playing games with words and books can get your child excited about language and boost her reading, writing, and speaking skills. Try these ideas.



Jump and rhyme

Jump rope chants let your youngster enjoy rhythms and rhymes. And while she's jumping and chanting, she's learning to hear the different sounds that make up words—a skill her teacher calls *phonemic awareness*.



Materials: jump rope

1. Say a word that your child could easily rhyme, such as *cat*. She should jump rope and make up a chant using that word and a rhyming one. (“I love my *cat*. How about *that*?”)

2. Then, she passes the rope to you. Repeat her lines, copying her rhythm,

and add another rhyming line. (“He wears a *hat*.”)

3. Go back and forth, repeating the chant and adding to it, until you can't think of another rhyming word. The last person to go chooses a new word to start the next round.

Roll a read-aloud

Use an existing board game to encourage your child to read aloud.

Materials: several short books, a game board with a path (example: *Candy Land*), a token for each player, one die

1. Ask your youngster to pick a book, and have players place their tokens at the beginning of the game path. The youngest person goes first.

2. On his turn, each player rolls the die and reads that many sentences from the book (roll a 5, read 5 sentences). Then, he moves his token that number of spaces (5).

3. Keep playing until someone gets a token all the way to “finish.” The winner reads the rest of the book aloud to the other players. *Note:* If you finish the book before someone wins, start a new one.

Act out a story

Play “story charades” to build your child's reading comprehension skills.

Materials: scraps of paper, pencil, bowl

1. Together, write the titles of several familiar books on separate slips of paper. *Examples:* *Corduroy* (Don Freeman), *The Gingerbread Man* (Gail Yerrill), *Strega Nona* (Tomie dePaola). Fold each slip in half, and place in a bowl.

2. Let your youngster choose a slip and silently act out a scene from the beginning, the middle, and the end of the story—in order. For *The Gingerbread Man*, he might pretend he's being chased and riding on a fox's back.

3. When he's finished, the other players try to guess his story.

If no one gets it right, ask your child to perform three new scenes from the book in order again. The first person to name the story acts out the next one.



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Tell a tale

Let your youngster stretch her imagination and practice speaking in front of others by making up stories to match pictures.

Materials: coloring book, crayons, stapler

1. Have your child open the coloring book to a random page and use the picture to start telling a story. (“Once upon a time, a duck found a baseball.”)
2. Ask her to close the book and pass it to the next person. That person opens to a different page and adds to the story. *Example:* “The duck took the baseball to the amusement park and hid under the merry-go-round.”
3. Continue handing the book around and adding to the story until everyone gets a turn. The last person to go should wrap up the story. *Idea:* Let your youngster color the pages you used to tell the tale, tear them out, and staple them together so she can retell the story.

Would you rather ...?

This guessing game mixes silly questions with language arts practice.

Materials: index cards, pencil, paper

1. Together, think of 15–20 “Would you rather?” questions, and write them on separate index cards. *Example:* “Would you rather (A) touch a worm or (B) chew a banana peel?” Shuffle the cards and place them facedown in a stack.
2. Give each person two blank index cards to use for voting. They should write A on one card and B on the other.
3. The first player draws a card and reads it aloud. The other players guess which answer that person will pick and then vote by putting their A or B card facedown.



4. The first player reveals his choice and explains why he picked it. Each person who guessed correctly scores a point. Then, it's the next player's turn. Continue until all of the cards are used. The person with the most points wins.

The play-it-smart game guide

Many store-bought games come packed with chances for your youngster to read, spell words, tell stories, and more. Here are some you can play.

Reading

Your child can read questions and answers with games like Beat the Parents, The Brainiac Game, and Jeopardy! Junior Edition Card Game.

Spelling and vocabulary

Choose games in which players make words to score points. *Examples:* Boggle Jr., Zingo!, and Scrabble Junior.



Writing and storytelling

Encourage your youngster to make up stories or poems by playing Rory's Story Cubes, Tell Tale, or Trunk Works Story Time.

Speaking

Games like Guess in 10, Apples to Apples Junior, and Don't Say It! throw in laughs as players communicate with each other and share ideas.

Tip: Look for these games at yard sales, swap with neighbors, or ask relatives to hand down ones their kids have outgrown.